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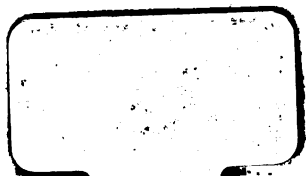


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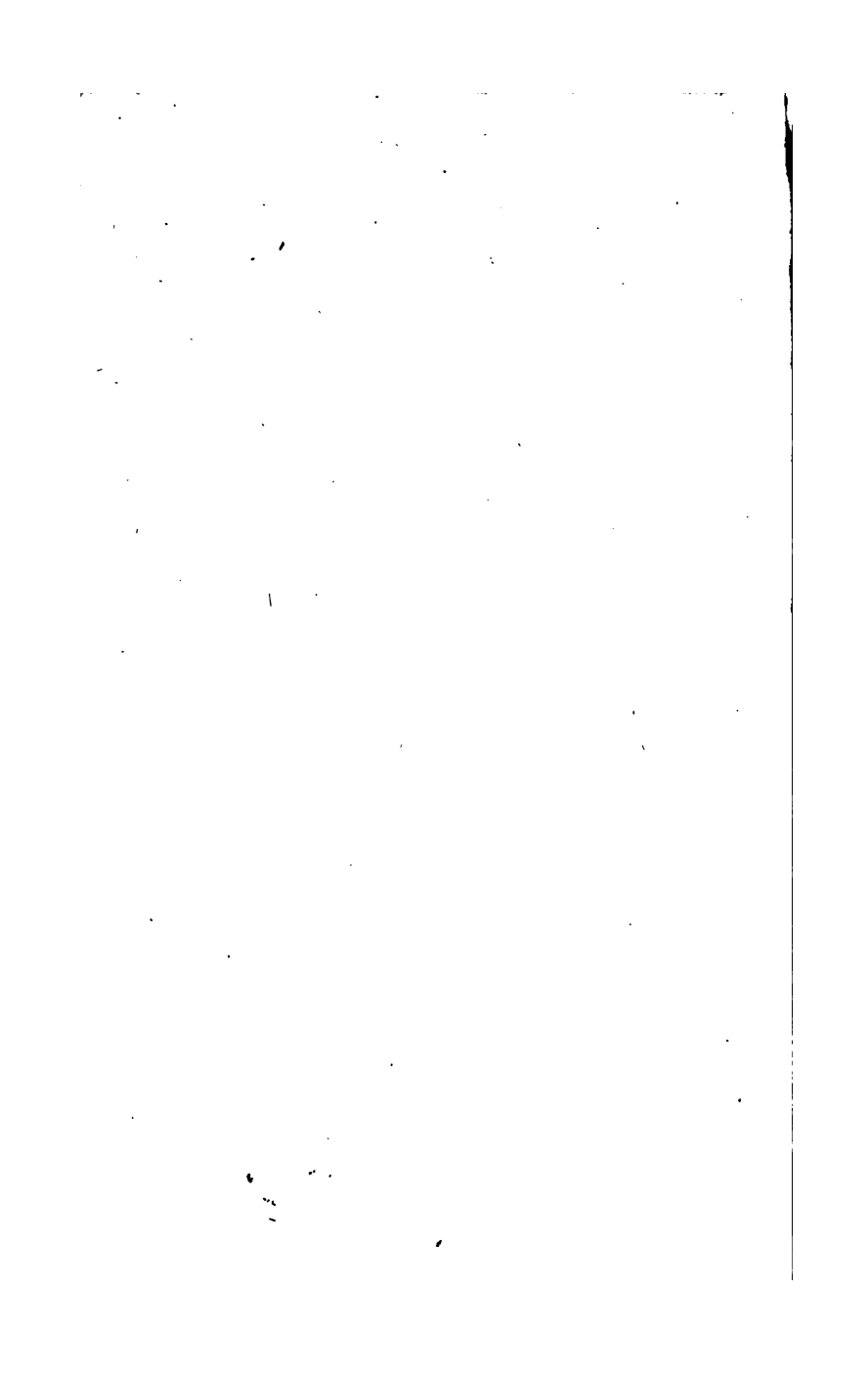


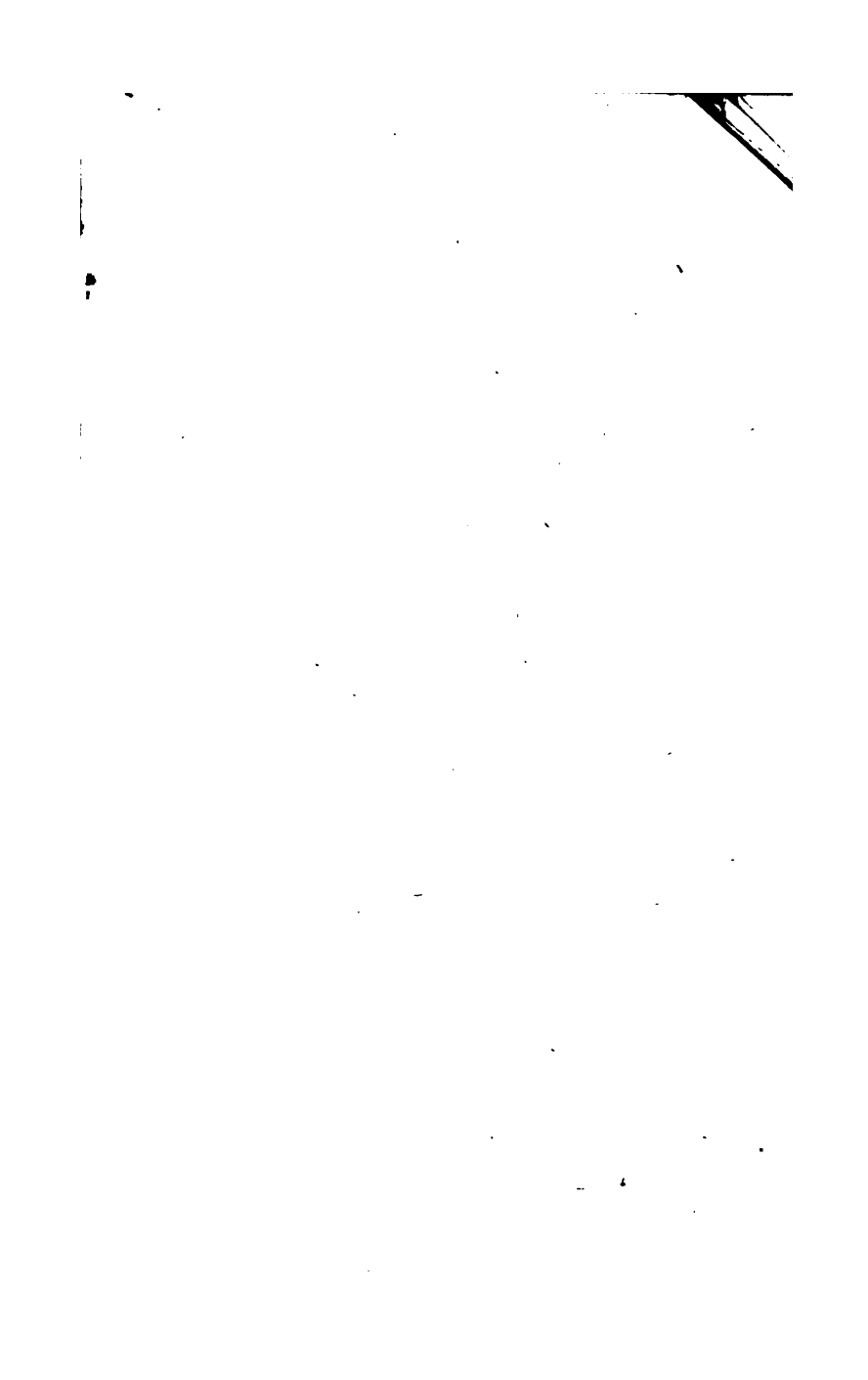


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THE
S E R M O N S
Peter OF *Lanthe*
Mr. Y O R I C K.

VOL. III.



DUBLIN:

Printed for W. SMITH and SON, A. LEATHLY,
J. HOEY, sen. P. WILSON, J. EXSHAW,
H. BRADLEY, E. WATTS, H. SAUNDERS,
W. SLEATER, J. HOEY, jun. J. POTTS,
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MDCCLXVI.



S E R M O N

B Y

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and Vicar of Sutton on
Forest, and of Stilling
near York.



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SERMON I.

I SAMUEL XIX. 21. 1st Part.

But Abishai said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this ?——

—IT has not a good aspect——
This is the second time *Abishai* has proposed *Shimei's* destruction ; once in the 16th chapter, on a sudden transport of indignation, when *Shimei* cursed David, — “ *Why should this dead dog, cried Abishai, curse my lord the king ? let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head.* ”——This had something at least of gallantry in it ; for in doing it, he hazarded his own ; and besides the offender was not otherwise to be come at : the second time, is in the text ; when the offender was absolutely in their power——when the blood was cool ; and the suppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not *Shimei*, answered *Abishai*, be put to death for this ? So unrelenting

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a pursuit looks less like justice than revenge, which is so cowardly a passion, that it renders Abishai's first instance almost inconsistent with the second. I shall not endeavour to reconcile them ; but confine the discourse simply to Shimei ; and make such reflections upon his character as may be of use to society.

Upon the news of his son Absalom's conspiracy, David had fled from Jerusalem, and from his own house for safety : the representation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting :—never was a scene of sorrow so full of distress !

The king fled with all his household to save himself from the sword of the man he loved : he fled with all the marks of humble sorrow—" *with his head cover'd and barefoot ;*" and as he went by the ascent of mount Olivet, the sacred historian says he wept—some glad some scenes, perhaps, which there had pass'd—some hours of festivity he had shared with Absalom in better days, pressed tenderly upon nature,——he wept at this sad vicissitude of things :—and all the people

people that were with him, smitten with his affliction, *cover'd each man his head weeping as he went up.*

It was on this occasion, when David had got to Bahurim; that Shimei the son of Gera, as we read in the 5th verse; came out :—was it with the choicest oils he could gather from mount Oliver, to pour into his wounds?—Times and troubles had not done enough ; and thou camest out, Shimei, to add thy portion——

“ And as he came, he cursed David, and threw stones and cast dust at him ; and thus said Shimei, when he cursed : Go to, thou man of Belial—thou hast sought blood, —and behold thou art caught in thy own mischief ; for now hath the Lord returned upon thee all the blood of Saul and his house.

There is no small degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a season to give a mark of enmity and ill will : a word, — a look, which at one time would make no impression—at another time wounds

the heart; and like a shaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would scarce have reached the object aimed at.

This seemed to have been Shimei's hopes: but excess of malice makes men too quicksighted even for their own purpose. Could Shimei possibly have waited for the ebb of David's passions, and till the first great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood must have hurt him—his heart was possessed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly sting which Absalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a stranger—*Behold, my son Absalom, who came out of my bowels, seeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*"

An injury unanswered in course grows weary of itself, and dies away in a voluntary remorse.

In

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7.

In bad dispositions capable of no restraint but fear—it has a different effect—the silent digestion of one wrong provokes a second. He pursues him with the same invective; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him; and cursed as he went, and cast dust at him.*

The insolence of base minds in success is boundless; and would scarce admit of a comparison, did not they themselves furnish us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the same poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adversary; in some instances seems to exalt them above the point of courage; sinks them in others even below cowardice.—Not unlike some little particles of matter struck off from the surface of the dirt by sunshine—dance and sport there whilst it lasts—but the moment 'tis withdrawn—they fall down—for dust they are—and unto dust they will return—whilst firmer and larger bodies preserve the stations which nature

B. 4. has

has assigned them, subjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This last, did not seem to be Shimei's case; in all David's prosperity, there is no mention made of him—he thrust himself forward into the circle, and possibly was numbered amongst friends and well-wishers.

When the scene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his house in despair—Shimei is the first man we hear of, who comes out against him.

The wheel turns round once more; Absalom is cast down and David returns in peace—Shimei suits his behaviour to the occasion, and is the first man also who hastes to greet him—and had the wheel turn'd round an hundred times, Shimei, I dare say, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermost.

O Shimei! would to heaven when thou wast slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee; and not one of thy

S E R M O N I

9

thy resemblance left ! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and replenished the earth ; and if I prophecy rightly——
Ye will in the end *subdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei : whilst power meets with honest checks, and the evils of life with honest refuge, the world will never be undone ; but thou, Shimei, hast sapped it at both extremes ; for thou corruptest prosperity——and 'tis thou who hast broken the heart of poverty : and so long as worthless spirits, can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we shall never want. O ! it infests the court——the camp——the cabinet——it infests the church——go where you will——in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay.——

——Haste, Shimei !——haste ; or thou wilt be undone for ever——Shimei girdeth up his loins and speedeth after him——behold the hand which go-

verns every thing,——takes the wheels from off his chariot, so that he who driveth, driveth on heavily——Shimei doubles his speed——but 'tis the contrary way; he flies like the wind o'er a sandy desert, and the place thereof shall know it no more——stay, Shimei! 'tis your patron——your friend——your benefactor;——'tis the man who has raised you from the dunghil——'tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the simile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy affairs?——see——it hangs over Shimei's brow——*hast thou been* spoken for to the king or the captain of the host without success?——look not into the court-kalendar——the vacancy is fill'd up in Shimei's face——art thou in debt?——tho' not to Shimei——no matter——the worst officer of the law shall not be more insolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty so black——is it of so general a concern

concern, that thou and all thy family must rise up as one man to reproach it ? —when it lost every thing—did it lose the right to pity too ? or did he, who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, strip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and supple the temper of your race ?—Trust me, ye have much to answer for ; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from spirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greatest of evils, and shun it as the worst disgrace—and what is it, I beseech you—what is it that man will not do, to keep clear of so fore an imputation and punishment ?—is it not, to fly from this, that *he rises early* —*late takes rest ; and eats the bread of carefulness* ?—that he plots, contrives —swears —lies —shuffles —puts on all shapes —tries all garments, —wears them, with this, or that side outward—just as it favours his escape.

They who have considered our nature, affirm, that shame and disgrace are two of the most insupportable evils of human life ; the courage and spirits of many have

have master'd other misfortunes and borne themselves up against them ; but the wisest and best of souls have not been a match for these ; and we have many a tragical instance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh—so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man ; all its hunger, and pain and nakedness, are nothing to it, they have some counterpoise of good ; and besides they are directed by providence, and must be submitted to : but those are afflictions not from the hand of God or nature——“ *for they do come forth of the DUST, and most properly may be said to spring out of the GROUND, and this is the reason they lay such stress upon our patience,——and in the end, create such a distrust of the world, as makes us look up——and pray, Let me fall into thy hands, O God ! but let me not fall into the hands of men.*”

Agree-

SERMON I

Agreeable to this was the advice Eliphaz to Job in the day of his distress——“*acquaint thyself, said he, no with God :*”——indeed his poverty seem to have left him no other : the swords the Sabeans had frightened them away——all but a few friends ; and of what kind they were, the very proverb, *Job's comforters*——says enough.

It is an instance which gives one great concern for human nature, “ That man, *who always wept for him who was in trouble ;——who never saw any peril for want of cloathing ;——who never suffered the stranger to lodge in the street, but opened his door to the traveller ;——that man of so good a character,——“ that I never caused the eyes of the widow to fail——or had eaten his morsel by himself alone, and the fatherless had not eaten thereof ;”——that such a man, the moment he fell into poverty, should have occasion to cry out for quarter,——Have mercy upon me, O my friends ! for a hand of God has touched me.——Gentleness and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardest heart and cha*

the fiercest spirit ; bind up the most violent hand, and still the most abusive tongue :——but the experiment failed in a stronger instance of him, whose meat and drink it was to do us good ; and in pursuit of which, whose whole life was a continued scene of kindness and of insults ; for which we must go back to the same explanation with which we set out, ——and that is, the scandal of poverty.——

“ *This fellow, we know not whence he is*”——was the popular cry of one part ; and with those who seemed to know better, the quere, did not lessen the disgrace :——Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary ?——of Mary !——great God of Israel ! What !——of the meanest of thy people ! (*for he had not regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden*)——and of the poorest too ! (*for she had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moses directed in such a case, by the oblation of a turtle dove.*)——

That the SAVIOUR of their nation, could be poor, and not have where to lay

lay his head,——was a crime never to be forgiven : and tho' the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its support, were stronger arguments on its side, than his humiliation could be against it,——yet the offence still remained;——they looked for the redemption of Israel; but they would have it only in those dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the gold-smith's balance !——was this religion for you ?——a religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,——but looked thin and meagre, and whose principles and promises shewed more like the curses of the law, than its blessings :——for they called for sufferings and promised little but persecutions.

In truth it is not easy for tribulation or distress, for nakedness or famine, to make many converts out of pride ; or reconcile a worldly heart to the scorn and reproaches, which were sure to be the portion of every one who believed a
mystery

mystery so discredited by the world, and so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures.

But to bring this sermon to its proper conclusion.

If Astrea or Justice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty first became ridiculous, it is matter of consolation, that the God of Justice is ever over us:—that whatever outrages the lowness of our condition may be exposed to, from a mean and undiscerning world,—that we walk in the presence of the greatest and most generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and straitness of mind, and all those little and illiberal passions, with which we hourly insult each other.

The worst part of mankind, are not always to be conquered—but if they are—'tis by the imitation of these qualities which must do it:—'tis true—as I've shewn—they may fail; but still all is not lost,—for if we conquer not the world,—in the very attempts to do it,

it, we shall at least conquer ourselves,
and lay the foundation of our peace
(where it ought to be) within our own
hearts.



1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of a solution of the system of equations (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β . It is shown that the system of equations (1) has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters α and β if and only if the condition

$$\alpha + \beta = 1$$

S E R M O N II.

**The Case of Hezekiah and
the Messengers.**

**Preached before his Excellency the
Earl of HERTFORD.**

At Paris, 1763.

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S E R M O N II.

2 KINGS XX. 15.

*And he said, What have they seen in
thine house ? and Hezekiah answered, All
the things that are in my house have they
seen ; there is nothing amongst all my trea-
sures that I have not shewn them.*

— **A**ND where was the harm, you'll
say, in all this ?

“ An eastern prince, the son of Bala-
dine, had sent messengers with presents
as far as from Babylon, to congratulate
Hezekiah upon the recovery from his
sickness ; and Hezekiah, who was a good
prince, acted consistently with himself :
*he received and entertained the men and
bearkened unto them,* and before he sent
them away, he courteously shewed them
all that was worth a stranger's curiosity
in his house and in his kingdom, —
and in this, seemed only to have dis-
charged himself of what urbanity or the
etiquette

etiquette of courts might require. Notwithstanding this, in the verse which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiss; and as a punishment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in store unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon,——the very place from whence the messengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not seem to have deserved. To set this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to enlarge upon the whole story,——the reflections which will arise out of it, as we go along, may help us——at least, I hope they will be of use on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Assyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was sick even unto death; and that God sends the prophet Isaiah, with the unwelcome message, *That he should set his house in order, for that he should die, and not live.*

There

There are many instances of men, who have received such news with the greatest ease of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with smiles upon their countenances,——and this, either from strength of spirits and the natural chearfulness of their temper,——or that, they knew the world,——and cared not for it,——or expected a better——yet thousands of good men with all the helps of philosophy, and against all the assurances of a well spent life, that the change must be to their account,——upon the approach of death have still lean'd towards this world, and wanted spirits and resolution to bear the shock of a separation from it for ever.

This in some measure seemed to have been Hezekiah's case; for tho' he had walked before God in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his sight,——yet we find that the hasty summons afflicted him greatly;——that upon the delivery of the message he wept sore;——that he turned his face towards
the

the wall, — perhaps for the greater secrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himself thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his God, with greater and more fervent attention.

—And he prayed, and said, O LORD ! I beseech thee remember—
O Hezekiah ! How couldst thou fear that God had forgotten thee ? or, How couldst thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he called thee to receive it's recompence ?

But here it appears of what materials man is made : he pursues happiness —and yet is so content with misery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it, —and say, "*It is good, Lord ! to be here, and to build tabernacles of rest :*" and so long as we are cloathed with flesh, and nature has so great a share within us, it is no wonder if that part claims it's right and pleads for the sweetness of life, notwithstanding all it's care and disappointments.

This

This natural weakness, no doubt, had it's weight in Hezekiah's earnest prayer for life : and yet from the success it met with, and the immediate change of God's purpose thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it must have been accompanied with some meritorious and more generous motive : and if we suppose, as some have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, because that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whose preservation lay next his heart, we may consistently enough give this sense to his prayer.

“ O God ! remember how I have
 “ walked before thee in truth ;——
 “ how much I have done to rescue thy
 “ religion from error and falsehood ;——
 “ thou knowest that the eyes of the
 “ world are fixed upon me, as one that
 “ hath forsaken their idolatry, and re-
 “ stored thy worship ;——that I stand
 “ in the midst of a crooked and corrupt
 “ generation, which looks thro' all my
 “ actions, and watches all events which
 “ happen to me : if now they shall see
 VOL. III. C “ me

“ me snatched away in the midst of my
 “ days and service, How will thy great
 “ name suffer in my extinction? Will
 “ not the heathen say, This it is, to
 “ serve the God of Israel!—How
 “ faithfully did Hezekiah walk before
 “ him?—What enemies did he bring
 “ upon himself, in too warmly promo-
 “ ting his worship? and now when the
 “ hour of sickness and distress came up-
 “ on him, and he most wanted the aid
 “ of his God:—behold how he was
 “ forsaken!”

It is not unreasonable, to ascribe some
 such pious and more disinterested motive
 to Hezekiah's desire of life, from the issue
 and success of his prayer:—*for it came
 to pass before Isaiah had gone out into the
 middle court, that the word of the Lord
 came to him, saying, Turn again and tell
 Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have
 seen his tears, and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occasion, as we read
 in the 12th verse of this chapter, that
 Baradock-baladan, son of Baladine king
 of

of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah : he had heard the fame of his sickness and recovery ; for as the Chaldeans were great searchers into the secrets of nature, especially into the motions of the celestial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice at that distance, of the strange appearance of the shadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had enquired and learned upon what account, and in whose favour such a sign was given ; so that this astronomical miracle, besides the political motive which it would suggest of courting such a favourite of heaven, had been sufficient by itself to have led a curious people as far as Jerusalem, that they might see the man for whose sake the sun had forsook his course.

And here we see how hard it is to stand the shock of prosperity, — and how much truer a proof we give of our strength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

“ ———What ! was thy heart so vain as
“ to be lifted up therewith ? Was not
“ all that was valuable in the world—
“ nay, was not heaven itself almost at
“ thy command whilst thou wast hum-
“ ble ? and, How was it, that thou
“ couldst barter away all this, for what
“ was lighter than a bubble, and dese-
“ crate an action so full of courtesy and
“ kindness as thine appeared to be, by
“ suffering it to take it's rise from so
“ polluted a fountain ?”

There is scarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analysis of this kind.

We are a strange compound ; and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where interest lifts under it all the powers of disguise,—but even in the most indifferent of our actions,—not worth a fallacy——by force of habit, we continue it : so that whatever a man is about,—observe him,——
he

he stands arm'd inside and out with two motives ; an ostensible one for the world, and another which he reserves for his own private use ;——this, you may say, the world has no concern with : it might have been so ; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a character, instead of winning one ;——we give it a right and a temptation along with it, to enquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deserving it. Let us see if some social virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her sons to be generous and brave,——and her daughters to be chaste and courteous.——But why do we want her instructions ?——Ask the comedian who is taught a part he feels not.——

Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion

for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?—God! thou knowest they carry us too high—we want not *to be*—but *to seem*—

Look out of your door,——take notice of that man: see what disquieting, intriguing and shifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain dealing:——three grains of honesty would save him all this trouble:——alas! he has them not.——

Behold a second, under a shew of piety hiding the impurities of a debauched life:——he is just entering the house of God:——would he was more pure——or less pious:——but then he could not gain his point.

Observe a third going on almost in the same track,——with what an inflexible sanctity of deportment, he sustains himself as he advances:——every line in his face writes abstinence;——every stride looks like a check upon his desires: see, I beseech you, how he is
cloak'd

cloak'd up with sermons, prayers and sacraments ; and so bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to spare for a worldly purpose ;— he has armour at least——Why does he put it on ? Is there no serving God without all this ? Must the garb of religion be extended so wide to the danger of it's rending ?——Yes truly, or it will not hide the secret——and, What is that ?

——That the saint has no religion at all.

——But here comes GENEROSITY ; giving——not to a decayed artist—— but to the arts and sciences themselves.

——See,——he *builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet* ; but whole schools and colleges for those who come after. LORD ! how they will magnify his name !——'tis in capitals already ; the first——the highest, in the gilded rent-roll of every hospital and asylum——

———One honest tear shed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic set of creatures does simulation make us! Who would divine that all that anxiety and concern so visible in the airs of one half of that great assembly should arise from nothing else, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of consequence, penetration, parts and conduct?———What a noise amongst the claimants about it? Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,———and honesty almost out of knavery :———*Chastity*, never once in harm's way, ———and courage, like a Spanish foldier upon an Italian stage—a bladder full of wind.———

———Hark! that, the sound of that trumpet,———let not my foldier run, ———'tis some good Christian giving alms. O, *Pity*, thou gentlest of human passions! soft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with so loud an instrument.

Thus

Thus something jars, and will for ever jar in these cases : imposture is all dissonance, let what master so ever of it, undertake the part ; let him harmonize and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another ; and whilst we have ears to hear, we shall distinguish it : 'tis truth only which is consistent and ever in harmony with itself : it sits upon our lips, like the natural notes of some melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no ;——it racks no invention to let ourselves alone,——and needs fear no critic, to have the same excellency in the heart which appears in the action.

It is a pleasing allusion the scripture makes use of in calling us sometimes a house, and sometimes a temple, according to the more or less exalted qualities of the spiritual guest which is lodged within us : whether this is the precise ground of the distinction, I will not affirm ; but thus much may be said, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and singleness of heart which must make the dedi-

dedication : 'tis this which must first distinguish them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impositions are practised by the host upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment and returns not again.

We all take notice, how close and reserved people are : but we do not take notice at the same time, that every one may have something to conceal, as well as ourselves ; and that we are only marking the distances, and taking the measures of self-defence from each other, in the very instances we complain of : this is so true, that there is scarce any character so rare, as a man of a real open and generous integrity, who carries——his heart in his hand,——who says the thing he thinks ; and does the thing he pretends. Tho' no one can dislike the character,——yet ; Discretion generally shakes her head,——and the world soon lets him into the reason.

“ O that I had in the wilderness a lodging of way-faring men ! that I might leave such

such a people and go from them." Where is the man of a nice sense of truth and strong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world, has not at one time or other wrung the same wish; and where lies the wilderness to which some one has not fled, from the same melancholy impulse?

Thus much for those who give occasion to be thought ill of:—let us say a word or two unto those who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant, as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to say, because I do not think it, —that 'tis a breach of Christian charity to think or speak evil of our neighbour, &c.

We cannot avoid it: our opinions must follow the evidence; and we are, perpetually in such engagements and situations, that 'tis our duties to speak what our opinions are— but God forbid, that this ever should be done, but from its best motive—the sense
of

of what is due to virtue, governed by discretion and the utmost fellow-feeling : were we to go on otherwise, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocrisy, and so down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy all that look'd seemly,——we should leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to say to a character less equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world : it is that of those, who from a general distrust of all that looks disinterested, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,——immediately fall foul upon its motives : *Does Job serve God for nought ?* What a vile insinuation ! besides, the question was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man ;——but, whether he was a man of integrity or no ? and the appearances were strong on his side : indeed it might have been otherwise ; it was possible Job might be insincere, and the devil took advantage of the die for it.

It

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible master, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forsake his vices?——
——the position is not to be allowed;
——no; his vices have forsaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God and say her prayers :——she is in her climacteric.

Does humanity cloath and educate the unknown orphan?——Poverty! thou hast no genealogies :——see! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the best part of their glory——their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away, all that is worth having in it;—wrest it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it, with infamy;—undo it all——I beseech you: give him back his honour,—restore the jewel you have taken from him,——replace him in the eye of the world——

——it is too late.

It

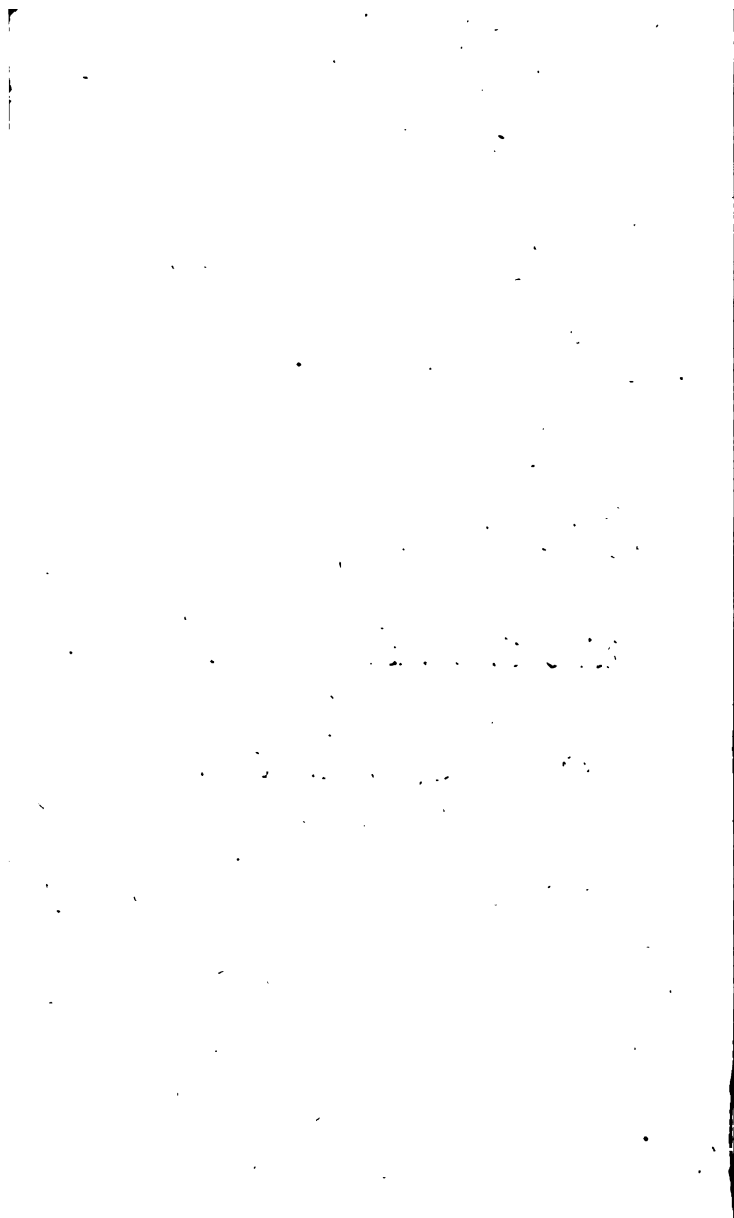
It is painful to utter the reproaches which should come in here.—I will trust them with yourselves : in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce such fruits as will not set your teeth on edge——for they will be the fruits of love and good will, to the praise of God and the happiness of the world, which I wish.

S E R-

S E R M O N III.

The LEVITE and his

C O N C U B I N E.



S E R M O N III.

JUDGES XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.——

—— **A** CONCUBINE! —— but the text accounts for it, *for in those days there was no king in Israel, and the Levite, you will say, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,——and so, you may add, did his concubine too——for she played the whore against him, and went away.——*

—— Then shame and grief go with her, and wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand of justice shut the door against her.——

Not so ; for she went unto her father's house in Bethlehem-judah, and was with
him

him four whole months.—Blessed interval for meditation upon the fickleness and vanity of this world and its pleasures ! I see the holy man upon his knees,—with hands compressed to his bosom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had so long shared his affections, was fled.—

The text gives a different picture of his situation ; *for he arose and went after her to speak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses ; and she brought him unto her father's house ; and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.*——

——A most sentimental group ! 'you'll say : and so it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing : give but the outlines of a story,——let *spleen* or *prudery* snatch the pencil, and they will finish it with so many hard strokes, and with so dirty a colouring, that *can-dour* and *courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it.——Gentle and virtuous spirits !

rits ! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,—to you, I address myself, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the misguided,—whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office ? How often must ye repeat it, “ That such a one’s doing so or so,”—is not sufficient evidence by itself to overthrow the accused ? That our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight ; — that the first springs and motives which impell’d the unfortunate, lie deeper still ; — and that of the millions which every hour are arraign’d, thousands of them may have err’d merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil ; and even when from the heart,—that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,—the force of the passions,—the suitableness of the object, and the many struggles of virtue before she fell,—may be so many appeals from justice to the judgment seat of pity.

Here

Here then let us stop a moment, and give the story of the Levite and his Concubine a second hearing : like all others much of it depends upon the telling ; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a story on which the heart cannot be at a loss for what to say, or the imagination for what to suppose—the danger is, humanity may say too much.

And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, took unto himself a Concubine.——

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful ! if this was wrong,——Why didst thou set so ensnaring an example before the eyes of thy descendants ? and, Why did the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, bless so often the seed of such intercourses, and promise to multiply and make princes come out of them ?

God

God can dispense with his own laws ; and accordingly we find the holiest of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture whose hearts cleaved most unto God, accommodating themselves as well as they could to the dispensation : that Abraham had Hagar ; ——— that Jacob, besides his two wives Rachael and Leah, took also unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes descended : ——— that David had seven wives and ten concubines ; ——— Rehoboam, sixty, ——— and that, in whatever cases it became reproachable, it seemed not so much the thing itself, as the abuse of it, which made it so ; this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whose excess became an insult upon the privileges of mankind ; for by the same plan of luxury, which made it necessary to have forty thousand stalls of horses, — he had unfortunately miscalculated his other wants, and so had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wife

Wife——deluded man ! was it not that thou madest some amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee ! ——three hundred——but let us turn aside, I beseech you, from so bad a stumbling block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to distinguish her from the more infamous species, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewish *æconomicks*, these differ'd little from the wife, except in some outward ceremonies and stipulations, but agreed with her in all the true essences of marriage, and gave themselves up to the husband, (for so he is call'd) with faith plighted, with sentiments and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to share his solitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation ; for notwithstanding all we meet
with

with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . Yet still, "*it is not good for man to be alone :*" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind ; in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship ;——a good heart wants some object to be kind to——and the best parts of our blood, and the purest of our spirits suffer most under the destitution.

Let the torpid Monk seek heaven comfortless and alone —— God speed him ! For my own part, I fear, I should never so find the way : let me be wise and religious——but let me be MAN : wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee——give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes goes
 VOL. III. D down

down ;——to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of nature ! How sweet the flowers of the field ! How delicious are these fruits !

Alas ! with bitter herbs, like his passover, did the Levite eat them : for as they thus walked the path of life together,——she wantonly turn'd aside into another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it : but in this they have the advantage ; whatever be the sense of their wrongs, that pride stands not so watchful a centinel over their forgiveness, as it does in the breasts of the fierce and froward : we should all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave ; but it is apt to interpose it's ill offices in remissions, especially of this kind : the truth is, it has it's laws, to which the heart is not always a party ; and acts so like an unfeeling

feeling engine in all cases without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself——his Concubine —— and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him :——much matter for pleading——and many an embarrassing account on all sides : in a period of four whole months, every passion would take it's empire by turns ; and in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard——RELIGION herself would not be silent, CHARITY would have much to say,——and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of Mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he passed by, would sollicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf, more powerful than them all.

“ I grant——I grant it all,”——he would cry,——“ ’tis foul ! ’tis faithless !
“ ——but, Why is the door of mercy
“ to be shut forever against it ? and,
“ Why is it to be the only sad crime
“ that the injured may not remit, or
“ reason or imagination pass over with-
“ out a scar ? ——Is it the blackest ?
“ In what catalogue of human offences
“ is it so marked ? Or, Is it, that of
“ all others, ’tis a blow most grievous
“ to be endured ?——the heart cries
“ out, It is so : but let me ask my own,
“ What passions are they which gave
“ edge and force to this weapon which
“ has struck me ? and, Whether it is
“ not my own pride, as much as my
“ virtues, which at this moment ex-
“ cite the greatest part of that intoler-
“ able anguish in the wound which I am
“ laying to her charge ? But merciful
“ heaven ! was it otherwise, Why is an
“ unhappy creature of thine to be per-
“ secuted by me with so much cruel
“ revenge and rancorous despite as my
“ first

“ first transport called for ? Have faults
 “ no extenuations ? — Makes it no-
 “ thing, that, when the trespass was
 “ committed, she forsook the partner
 “ of her guilt, and fled directly to her
 “ father’s house ? And is there no dif-
 “ ference betwixt one propensely going
 “ out of the road and continuing there,
 “ thro’ depravity of will—and a hap-
 “ less wanderer straying by delusion,
 “ and warily treading back her steps ?
 “ —Sweet is the look of sorrow for an
 “ offence, in a heart determined never
 “ to commit it more ! —Upon that
 “ altar only, could I offer up my
 “ wrongs. Cruel is the punishment
 “ which an ingenuous mind will take
 “ upon itself, from the remorse of so
 “ hard a trespass against me, —and
 “ if that will not balance the account,—
 “ just God ! let me forgive the rest.
 “ Mercy well becomes the heart of
 “ all thy creatures,—but most of thy
 “ servant, a Levite, who offers up so
 “ many daily sacrifices to thee, for the
 “ transgressions of thy people.—

——“ But to little purpose, he would
 “ add, have I served at thy altar, where
 “ my business was to sue for mercy,
 “ had I not learned to practise it.”

Peace and happiness rest upon the
 head and heart of every man who can
 thus think !

*So he arose, and went after her to
 speak friendly to her* —— in the original
 ——“ to speak to her heart ;” ——to
 apply to their former endearments, ——
 and to ask, How she could be so unkind
 to him, and so very unkind to her-
 self. ? ——

——Even the upbraidings of the
 quiet and relenting are sweet : not like
 the strivings of the fierce and inexora-
 ble, who bite and devour all who have
 thwarted them in their way ; ——but they
 are calm and courteous like the spirit
 which watches over their character :
 How could such a temper woo the dam-
 sel

fel and not bring her back? or, How could the father of the damsel, in such a scene, have a heart open to any impressions but those mentioned in the text ;— *That when he saw him, he rejoiced to meet him ;* —urged his stay from day to day, with that most irresistible of all invitations, —“ *Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*”

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in settling this account, *Love* would surely be of the party : great——great is it's power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itself : and so it was ——for the Levite arose up, and with him his Concubine and his servant, and they departed.

It serves no purpose to pursue the story further ; the catastrophe is horrid ; and would lead us beyond the particular purpose for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it,——and that is, to dis-

credit rash judgment; and illustrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courtesy which the *dramatis personæ* of every other piece, may have a right, to. Almost one half of our time is spent in telling and hearing evil of one another — some unfortunate knight is always upon this stage — and every hour brings forth something strange and terrible to fill up our discourse and our astonishment, “How people can be so foolish!” — and ’tis well if the compliment ends there : so that there is not a social virtue for which there is so constant a demand, — or, consequently, so well worth cultivating, as that which opposes this unfriendly current — many and rapid are the springs which feed it, and various and sudden, God knows, are the gusts which render it unsafe to us in this short passage of our life : let us make the discourse as serviceable as we can, by tracing some of the most remarkable of them, up to their source.

And

And first, there is one miserable inlet to this evil, and which by the way, if speculation is supposed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from some of our busiest enquirers after nature,——and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge, we account for phenomena, before we are sure of their existence.——*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death, (much less to be martyr'd) said Festus;——and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth; cried Nicodemus; and be that answereth, or determineth, a matter before he has heard it,—— it is folly and a shame unto him.——*We are generally in such a haste to make our own decrees, that we pass over the justice of these,——and then the scene is so changed by it, that 'tis our folly only which is real, and that of the accused, which is imaginary: through too much precipitancy it will happen so;——and then the jest is spoiled, ——or we have criticised our own shadow.

A second way is, when the process goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information, —— but do it from those suspected evidences, against which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us “*not to judge according to appearance :*” —— in truth, 'tis behind these, that most of the things which blind human judgment, lie concealed, —— and on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be, —— which are not —— *Christ came eating and drinking, —— behold a wine-bibber !* —— he sat with sinners —— he was their friend : —— in many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, —— scorns art —— and disdains to press herself forwards into the circle to be seen : —— ground sufficient for *Suspicion* to draw up the libel, —— for *Malice* to give the torture, —— or rash *Judgment* to start up and pass a final sentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote misconduct, are less disputable, but

But are commented upon with an asperity of censure; which a humane or a gracious temper would spare : an abhorrence against what is criminal; is so fair a plea for this, and looks so like virtue in the face, that in a sermon against rash judgment, it would be unseasonable to call it in question,——and yet, I declare, in the fullest torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deserve, that the simple apostrophe, “ Who made me to differ : why was not I an example ? ” would touch my heart more, and give me a better earnest of the commentators;——than the most corrosive period you could add. The punishment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it;——and were it not,——’tis pitious, the tongue of a Christian, whose religion is all candour and courtesy, should be made the executioner. We find in the discourse between Abraham and the rich man, tho’ the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with mild language :——*Son !——Son, remember that thou in thy life time, &c.*
8&c.

&c ——— and in the dispute about the body of Moses, between the Arch-angel and the devil, (himself,) St. Jude tells us, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him ; ——— 'twas unworthy his high character, ——— and indeed, might have been impolitic too ; for if he had, (as one of our divines notes upon the passage) the devil had been too hard for him at railing, ——— 'twas his own weapon, ——— and the basest spirits after his example are the most expert at it.

This leads me to the observation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the desire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honestly by the title, by shrewd and sarcastick reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is setting up trade upon the broken stock of other people's failings, ——— perhaps their misfortunes : ——— so much good may't do them with what honour they can get, ——— the furthest extent of which, I think, is to be praised, as we do some
faucets,

fauces, with tears in our eyes : It is a commerce most illiberal ; and as it requires no vast capital, too many embark in it, and so long as there are bad passions to be gratified,——and bad heads to judge, with such it may pass for wit, or at least like some vile relation, whom all the family is ashamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main essence of it was satire : certainly there is a difference between *Bitterness* and *Saltiness*,——that is,——between the malignity and the festivity of wit, — the one is a mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity, —— and is a talent of the devil ; the other comes down from the father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man ; or if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the absurdity, and let it pass.——He may smile at the shape of the obelisk raised to another's

other's fame,——but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it——

What then, ye rash censurers of the world! Have ye no mansions for your credit, but those from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to shine in, that ye descend for it, into the low caverns of abuse and crimination? Have ye no seats——but those of the scornful to sit down in? if *Honour* has mistook his road, or the *Virtues* in their excesses have approached too near the confines of *VICE*, Are they therefore to be cast down the precipice? Must *BEAUTY* for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one——one false step? And shall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thousand the fair penitent may have left, ——shall not one of them be suffered to stand by her —— Just *GOD* of Heaven and Earth! ——

——But

—— But thou art merciful loving and righteous, and lookest down with pity upon these wrongs thy servants do unto each other : pardon us, we beseech thee, for them, and all our transgressions ; let it not be remembered, that we were brethren of the same flesh, the same feelings and infirmities.——O my God ! write it not down in thy book, that thou madest us merciful, after thy own image ;— that thou hast given us a religion so courteous,——so good tempered,—— that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the soreness of our natures, and sweeten our spirits, that we might live with such kind intercourse in this world, as will fit us to exist together in a better.

S E R-

S E R M O N IV.

F E L I X's

Behaviour towards P A U L,
examined.

THE JOURNAL OF THE

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Volume 100, Part 1, 1970

SERMON IV.

ACTS xxiv. 26.

He hoped also, that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.

A NOBLE object to take up the consideration of the Roman governor!

—— “*He hoped that money should have been given him!*” —— For what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong! —— and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor scrip of a disciple of the carpenter’s son, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and sufferings. ——

And was this Felix! —— the great, the noble Felix! —— Felix the happy! —— the gallant Felix who who kept Drusilla!

Drufilla!—Could he do this?—base passion! What can't ~~then~~ not make us do?

Let us consider the whole transaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accused before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,—of being a pestilent fellow,—a mover of seditions, and a prophaner of the temple, &c.—To which accusations, the apostle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verse, to this purport. He shews him first, that the whole charge was destitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce against him, if they had it;—that on the contrary, he was so far from being the man, Tertullus had represented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then stood charged,—and which they called heresy, led him to be the most unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exercise which it demanded

manded of him, of having a conscience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man; that consistently with this, his adversaries had neither found him in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue, or in the city, ——— for this he appeals to themselves: ——— that it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem for to worship: ——— that during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noise, without tumult; this he calls upon the Jews who came from Asia, and were eye-witnesses of his behaviour, to attest; — and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in so strong a manner, and with such plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adversaries to reply.

There was, however, still one adversary in this court, ——— the' silent, yet not satisfied ———

——Spare

——Spare thy eloquence, Tertellus ! roll up the charge : a more notable orator than thyself is risen up,——'tis AVARICE, and that too, in the most fatal place for the prisoner it could have taken possession of,——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly, —— (that is) released him without reward, —— this subtle advocate told him he would lose one of the profits of his employment——and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occasionally explained in his defence, ——it told him, he might lose the employment itself ; ——so that notwithstanding the character of the apostle appeared (as it was) most spotless ; and the faith he professed so very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave it's consent, ——yet, at the same time, the passion rebelled, and so strong an interest was formed thereby, against the first impressions, in favour of the man and his cause, that both were dismissed ; ——the one
to

to a more convenient hearing, which never came ; the other to the hardships of a prison for two whole years,——hoping, as the text informs us, that money should have been given him ; and even at the last, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleasure,——that is,——to serve his interest in another shape with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheless, left the holy man bound, and consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement, in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction ; and could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul,——

Paul, — (for she was a daughter of Abraham — as well as Eve) — was a character, which might have figured very well even in our own times : for as Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up without ceremony to Felix ; for which cause, tho' she is here called his wife, she was in reason and justice the wife of another man. — and consequently lived in an open state of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occasion to argue upon the morality of the gospel, — and urged the eternal laws of justice. — the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chastity was a branch, — it was scarce possible to frame his discourse so, (had he wished to temporize) but that either her interest or her love must have taken offence : and tho' we do not read, like Felix, that she trembled at the account, 'tis natural to imagine she was affected with other passions, of which the apostle might feel the effects — and 'twas well he suffered no more

more, if two such violent enemies as lust and avarice were combined against him.

But this, by the way,—for as the text seems only to acknowledge one of these motives, it is not our business to assign the other.

It is observable, that this same apostle, speaking, in his epistle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this same ruling passion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own sufferings, had no small share in the severity of the reflection.—Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a subordinate and ministerial passion, exercised for the support of some other vices; and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality or lust, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the least mercy and discretion; in which cases, strictly speaking, it is not the root of other evils,—but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recall what I have said upon covetousness, as a vice not naturally cruel : it is not apt to represent itself to our imaginations, at first sight, under that idea ; we consider it only as a mean, worthless turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right : but as it is a vice which does not always set up for itself,——to know truly what it is in this respect, we must know what masters it serves ;——they are many, and of various casts and humours,——and each one lends it something of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I suppose, may be the cause that there is a greater and more whimsical mystery in the love of money, than in the darkest and most nonsensical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the best, and when the passion seems to seek nothing more than its own amusement,——there is little——very little, I fear, to be said for its humanity.——

manity.——It may be a sport to the miser, —— but consider, —— it must be death and destruction to others.——The moment this sordid humour begins to govern——farewel all honest and natural affections! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!——how fast the obligations vanish! see!——he is now stripped of all feelings whatever : ——the shrill cry of Justice, ——and the low lamentation of humble distress, are notes equally beyond his compass.——Eternal God! see!——he passes by one whom thou hast just bruised, without one pensive reflection :——he enters the cabin of the widow whose husband and child thou hast taken to thyself, ——exact's his bond, without a sigh! Heaven! if I am to be tempted, ——let it be by glory, ——by ambition, ——by some generous and manly vice :——if I must fall, let it be by some passion which thou hast planted in my nature, which shall not harden my heart, but leave me room at last to retreat and come back to thee.

It would be easy here to add the common arguments which reason offers against this vice; but they are so well understood, both in matter and form, — it is needless.

I might cite to you what Seneca says upon it——but the misfortune is, that at the same time he was writing against riches, he was enjoying a great estate, and using every means to make that estate still greater.

With infinite pleasure might a preacher enrich his discourse in this place, by weaving into it all the smart things, which ancient or modern wits have said upon the love of money:——he might inform you,

——“That Poverty wants some things——that covetousness wanteth all.”

“That

“ That a miser can only be said to
“ have riches, as a sick man has a
“ fever, which holds and tyrannizes
“ over the man,—not he over it.”

“ That covetousness is the shirt of
“ the soul,——the last vice it parts
“ with.”

“ That nature is content with few
“ things,——or that nature is never
“ satisfied at all, &c.”

The reflection of our SAVIOUR,
*That the life of man consisteth not in the
abundance of the things which he possesseth,*
——speaks more to the heart——and
the single hint of the *Camel*, and what
a very narrow passage he has to go,——
has more coercion in it, than all the sec-
saws of philosophy.

I shall endeavour therefore to draw
such other reflections from this piece
of sacred story, as are applicable to
human life,——and more likely to be
of use.

There is nothing generally in which our happiness and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourselves to the world,—and as we govern ourselves by such judgments, so we secure our peace and well-being in passing through it: the false steps and miscarriages in life, issuing from a defect in this capital point, are so many and fatal, that there can be nothing more instructive than an enquiry into the causes of this perversion, which often appears so very gross in us, that were you to take a view of the world,—see what notions it entertains, and by what considerations it is governed,—you would say of the mistakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions,—“*That we were wise to do evil, but to judge rightly, had no understanding.*”

That in many dark and abstracted questions of mere speculation, we should err—is not strange: we live amongst mysteries

mysteries and riddles, and almost every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be said to baffle our understandings, — yet seldom, so as to mistake in extremities, and take one contrary for another ; — 'tis very rare, for instance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold, — or, that we try the experiment of opium to keep us waking : — yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and measures of it. That such wrong determinations in us, do not arise from any defect of judgment inevitably misleading us, — would reflect dishonour upon God ; as if he had made and sent men into the world on purpose to play the fool. His all bountiful hand, made his judgment, like his heart, upright ; and the instances of his sagacity in other things, abundantly confirm it : we are led therefore in course to a supposition, that in all inconsistent instances, there is a secret bias some how or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aside from reason and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to search for it in ourselves, we shall find it registered in this transaction of Felix : and we may depend, that in all wrong judgments whatever, in such plain cases as this, that the same explanation must be given of it, which is given in the text,——namely, that it is some selfish consideration——some secret dirty engagement with some little appetite, which does us so much dishonour.

The judgments of the more disinterested and impartial of us, receive no small tincture from our affections : we generally consult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in question is not almost settled, before the arbitrator is called into the debate ;——but in the more flagrant instances, where the passions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholly to see the office to which reason, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced ; serving the lower appetites in the dishonest drudgery of finding out arguments to justify the present pursuit.

To

To judge rightly of our own worth, we should retire a little from the world, to see all its pleasures—and pains too, in their proper size and dimensions;—this, no doubt, was the reason St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his discourse upon the day of judgment, on purpose to take the heart off from this world and its pleasures, which dishonour the understanding so as to turn the wisest of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your observations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has supported those desperate opinions, which have so long divided the Christian world,——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Consider popery well; you will be convinced, that the truest definition which can be given of it, is,——That it is a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking: run through all the points of difference be-

tween us,——and when you see, that in every one of them, they serve the same end which Felix had in view, either of money or power ; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud arises, which is spread over the understanding.

If this reasoning is conclusive with regard to those who merely differ from us in religion,——let us try if it will not hold good with regard to those who have none at all,——or rather, who affect to treat all persuasions of it, with ridicule alike. Thanks to good sense, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and seems to be settling at present, chiefly amongst the inferior classes of people——where it is likely to rest : as for the lowest ranks, tho' they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are not likely to be struck with this one, of making merry with that which is their consolation ; they are too serious a set of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.——

There

There is enough, however, of it in the world to say, that this all-sacred system, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the first object, that the giddy and inconsiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment,——do you believe that one in a thousand does it from conviction,——or from arguments which a course of study,——much cool reasoning,——and a sober enquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the question, has furnished him with? —— The years and way of life of the most froward of these, leads us to a different explanation.

Religion which lays so many restraints upon us, is a troublesome companion to those who will lay no restraints upon themselves;——and for this reason there is nothing more common to be observed, than that the little arguments and cavils, which such men have gathered up against it, in the early part of their lives,——how considerable soever they may have appeared, when viewed through their
passions

passions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,——yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the pursuit pretty well over,——and reason and judgment have got possession of their empire——

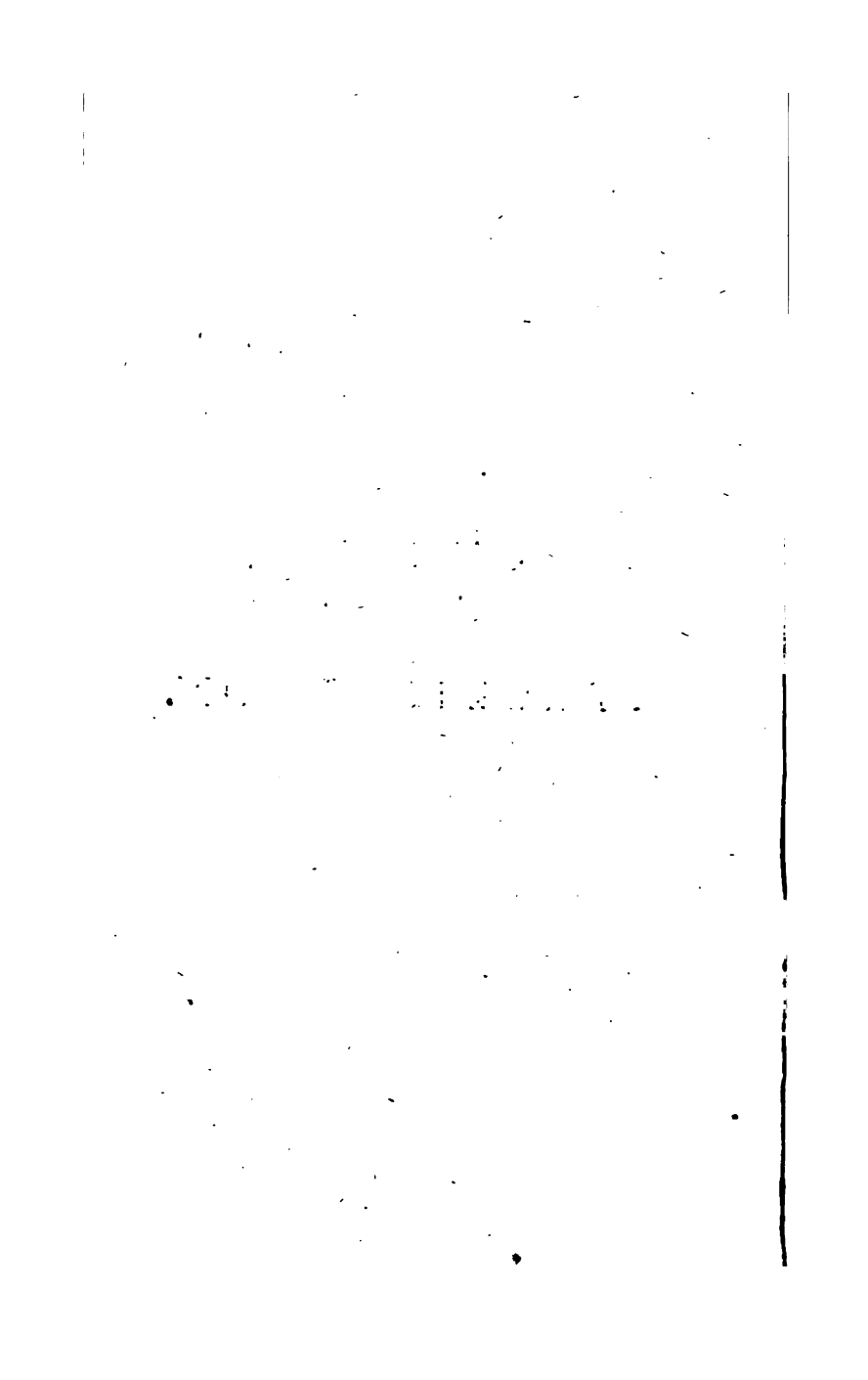
——They seldom fail of bringing the lost sheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

The P R O D I G A L S O N.



SERMON V.

LUKE XV. 13.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.——

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwise, that lessons of wisdom have never such power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a story which engages the passions: Is it that we are like iron, and must first be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart so in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we must cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whe-

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for so it is usually called)——is really such, or built upon some story known at that time in Jerusalem, is not much to the purpose, it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the best moral account we can.

“ A certain man, says our SAVIOUR,
 “ had two sons, and the younger of them
 “ said to his father, Give me the portion
 “ of goods which falls to me : and he
 “ divided unto them his substance. And
 “ not many days after, the younger son
 “ gathered all together, and took his
 “ journey into a far country, and there
 “ wasted his substance with riotous liv-
 “ ing.”

The account is short : the interesting and pathetic passages with which such a transaction would be necessarily connected, are left to be supplied by the heart :——the story is silent——but nature is not :——much kind advice, and many a tender exhortation would fall from the father's

father's lips, no doubt, upon this occasion.

He would dissuade his son from the folly of so rash an enterprize, by shewing him the dangers of the journey,——the inexperience of his age,——the hazard's his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend : he would tell him of the many snares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every step,——the pleasures which would sollicit him in every luxurious court,——the little knowledge he could gain——except that of evil : he would speak of the seductions of women,——their charms——their poisons :——what hapless indulgences he might give way to, when far from restraint, and the check of giving his father pain:

The dissuasive would but inflame his desire.——

He gathers all together.——

—I see the picture of his departure :
 —the camels and asses loaden with his
 substance, detached on one side of the
 piece, and already on their way :—
 the prodigal son standing on the fore-
 ground, with a forced sedateness, strug-
 gling against the fluttering movement of
 joy, upon his deliverance from restraint :
 —the elder brother holding his hand,
 as if unwilling to let it go :—the fa-
 ther,—sad moment ! with a firm look,
 covering a prophetic sentiment, “ that
 all would not go well with his child,”
 —approaching to embrace him, and
 bid him adieu. — Poor inconsiderate
 youth ! From whose arms art thou fly-
 ing ? From what a shelter art thou going
 forth into the storm ? Art thou weary of
 a father’s affection, of a father’s care ?
 or, Hopest thou to find a warmer in-
 terest, a truer counsellor, or a kinder
 friend in a land of strangers, where youth
 is made a prey, and so many thousands
 are confederated to deceive them, and
 live by their spoils.

We

We will seek no further than this idea, for the extravagancies by which the prodigal son added one unhappy example to the number : his fortune wasted,——the followers of it fled in course, the wants of nature remain,——the hand of God gone forth against him,——“*For when he had spent all, a mighty famine arose in that country.*”——Heaven ! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and distress, strayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his absence with anguish,——cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly,——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing so powerfully calls home the mind as distress : the tense fibre then relaxes,——the soul retires to itself,——it sits pensive and susceptible of right impressions : if we have a friend, 'tis then we think of him ; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindnesses press upon our mind. —— Gracious and bountiful God ! Is it not for this, that they who in their prosperity forget thee, do yet remem-

remember and return to thee in the hour of their sorrow? When our heart is in heaviness, upon whom can we think but thee; who knowest our necessities afar off,—puttest all our tears in thy bottle,——seekest every careful thought,——hearest every sigh and melancholy groan we utter.

Strange!——that we should only begin to think of God with comfort,——when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing else:

Man surely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unless he suffers in the flesh, he will not cease from sin*, tho' it is sure to bring pain and misery upon his head for ever.

Whilst all went pleasurable on with the prodigal; we hear not one word concerning his father,——no pang of remorse for the sufferings in which he had left him, or resolution of returning; to make up the account of his folly: his
first

first hour of distress, seemed to be his first hour of wisdom :—— *When he came to himself, he said, How many bired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, whilst I perish!*——

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or another dying by hunger, is the greatest, and it is wisely wove into our frame to awaken man to industry, and call forth his talents ; and tho' we seem to go on carelessly, sporting with it as we do with other terrors——yet, he that sees this enemy fairly, and in his most frightful shape, will need no long remonstrance, to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the case of the prodigal——
he arose to go unto his father.——

——Alas! How shall he tell his story ? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he shall give in to his father, the sad *Items* of his extravagance and folly ?

——The

The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east, — the costs of Asiatic rarities, — and of Asiatic cooks to dress them — the expenses of singing men and singing women, — the flute, the harp, the sack-but, and of all kinds of musick — the dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent ! their slaves how numerous ! — their chariots, their horses, their palaces, their furniture, what immense sums they had devoured ! — what expectations from strangers of condition ! what exactions !

How shall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damascus by one of the best men in the world ; — that he had lent a part of his substance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges ; — that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead ; — that he had been sold by a man of honour for twenty shekels of silver, to a worker in graven images ; — that the
images

Images he had purchased had profited him nothing ; — that they could not be transported a cross the wilderness, and had been burnt with fire at Shusan ; — that the * apes and peacocks, which he had sent for from Tharsis, lay dead upon his hands ; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt : — that all had gone wrong since the day he forsook his father's house.

———Leave the story———it will be told more concisely. ——— *When he was yet afar off, his father saw him,—— Compassion told it in three words——— he fell upon his neck and kissed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence : but never is it so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears : Casuists may settle the point as they will : But what could

* Vide Chronicles ix. 21.

a parent see more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenious heart too open for the world,—smitten with strong sensations of pleasures, and suffered to fall forth unarm'd into the midst of enemies stronger than himself?

Generosity sorrows as much for the over-matched, as pity herself does.

The idea of a son so ruin'd, would double the father's caresses; every effusion of his tenderness would add bitterness to his son's remorse.——“Gracious heaven! what a father have I rendered miserable!”

And he said, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said, Bring forth the best robe——

O ye

O ye affections ! How fondly do you play at cross-purposes with each other ?— 'Tis the natural dialogue of true transport : joy is not methodical ; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itself in the offence, — words are too cold ; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of esteem.

And he said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections so kindly break loose, Joy, is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taste it : the cold Stoick without, when he hears the dancing and the musick, may ask sullenly, (with the elder brother) What it means ; and refuse to enter : but the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the

banquet, given for a son who was dead and is alive again,——who was lost and is found. Gentle spirits, light up the pavilion with a sacred fire; and parental love, and filial piety lead in the mask with riot and wild festivity!——Was it not for this that God gave man music to strike upon the kindly passions; that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governess of the feast, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladness?

The intention of this parable is so clear from the occasion of it, that it will not be necessary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was designed by way of indirect remonstrance to the Scribes and Pharisees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR'S conduct, for entering so freely into conferences with sinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he proposes the parable of the shepherd, who left his ninety and nine sheep that were safe in the fold, to go and seek for one sheep that was gone astray,——tel-
ling

ling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a physician,—but they that were sick : ———and here, to carry on the same lesson, and to prove how acceptable such a recovery was to God, he relates this account of the prodigal son and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a subject of much edification, to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal son, particularly pointed at those who were *sinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine Grace to repentance ; ———and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifestly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their conversion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promises of God.

These uses have been so ably set forth, in so many good sermons upon the prodigal son, that I shall turn aside from them at present, and content myself with some

reflections upon that fatal passion which led him,——and so many thousands after the example, *to gather all be had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curiosity of seeing new things, which is the same, or at least a sister passion to it,——seems wove into the frame of every son and daughter of Adam; we usually speak of it as one of nature's levities, tho' planted within us for the solid purposes of carrying forwards the mind to fresh enquiry and knowledge: strip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the present page: and we should all of us rest at ease with such objects as presented themselves in the parish or province where we first drew our breath.

It is to this spur which is ever in our sides, that we owe the impatience of this desire for travelling: the passion is no way bad but as others are,——in it's mismanagement or excess;——order it rightly the advantages

ges are worth the pursuit ; the chief of which are—to learn the languages, the laws and customs, and understand the government and interest of other nations,——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more easily for conversation and discourse;——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery mistakes ; and by shewing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments——by tasting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*——by observing the address and arts of men, to conceive what is *sincere*,——and by seeing the difference of so many various humours and manners,——to look into ourselves and form our own.

This is some part of the cargo we might return with ; but the impulse of seeing new sights, augmented with that of getting clear from all lessons both of wisdom and reproof at home——carries our youth too early out, to turn this ven-

ture to much account ; on the contrary, if the scene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,——will it not be well if such an adventurer, with so unpromising a setting out, —— without *carte*, —— without compass, —— be not cast away for ever, —— and may he not be said to escape well —— if he returns to his country, only as naked, as he first left it ?

But you will send an able pilot with your son —— a scholar. ——

If wisdom can speak in no other language but Greek or Latin, —— you do well —— or if mathematicks will make a man a gentleman, —— or natural philosophy but teach him to make a bow, —— he may be of some service in introducing your son into good societies, and supporting him in them when he has done —— but the upshot will be generally this, that in the most pressing occasions of address, —— if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have

have the tutor to carry,——and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme ; he shall be escorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books——but from his own experience :——a man who has been employed on such services, and thrice made the *tour of Europe, with success.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck ;——for if he is such as my eyes have seen ! some broken *Swiss valet de chambre*,——some general undertaker, who will perform the journey in so many months “ IF GOD PERMIT,”——much knowledge will not accrue ;——some profit at least,——he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every stage from Calais to Rome ;——he will be carried to the best inns,——instructed where there is the best wine, and sup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himself.——Look at our go-
F 4
vernor.]

vernor ! I beseech you : ————see, he is an inch taller as he relates the advantages. ————

—————And here endeth his pride ————
his knowledge and his use.

But when your son gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his society with men of rank and letters, with whom he will pass the greatest part of his time.

Let me observe in the first place, ——— that company which is really good, is very rare ————and very shy : but you have surmounted this difficulty ; and procured him the best letters of recommendation to the most eminent and respectable in every capital. ————

And I answer, that he will obtain all by them, which courtesy strictly stands obliged to pay on such occasions, ————but no more.

There

There is nothing in which we are so much deceived, as in the advantages proposed from our connections and discourse with the literati, &c. in foreign parts; especially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or study.

Conversation is a traffic; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge, to ballance the account perpetually betwixt you,——the trade drops at once: and this is the reason,——however it may be boasted to the contrary, why travellers have so little (especially good) conversation with natives,——owing to their suspicion,——or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,——or the interruption of their visits.

The pain on these occasions is usually reciprocal; the consequence of which is, that the disappointed youth seeks an ea-

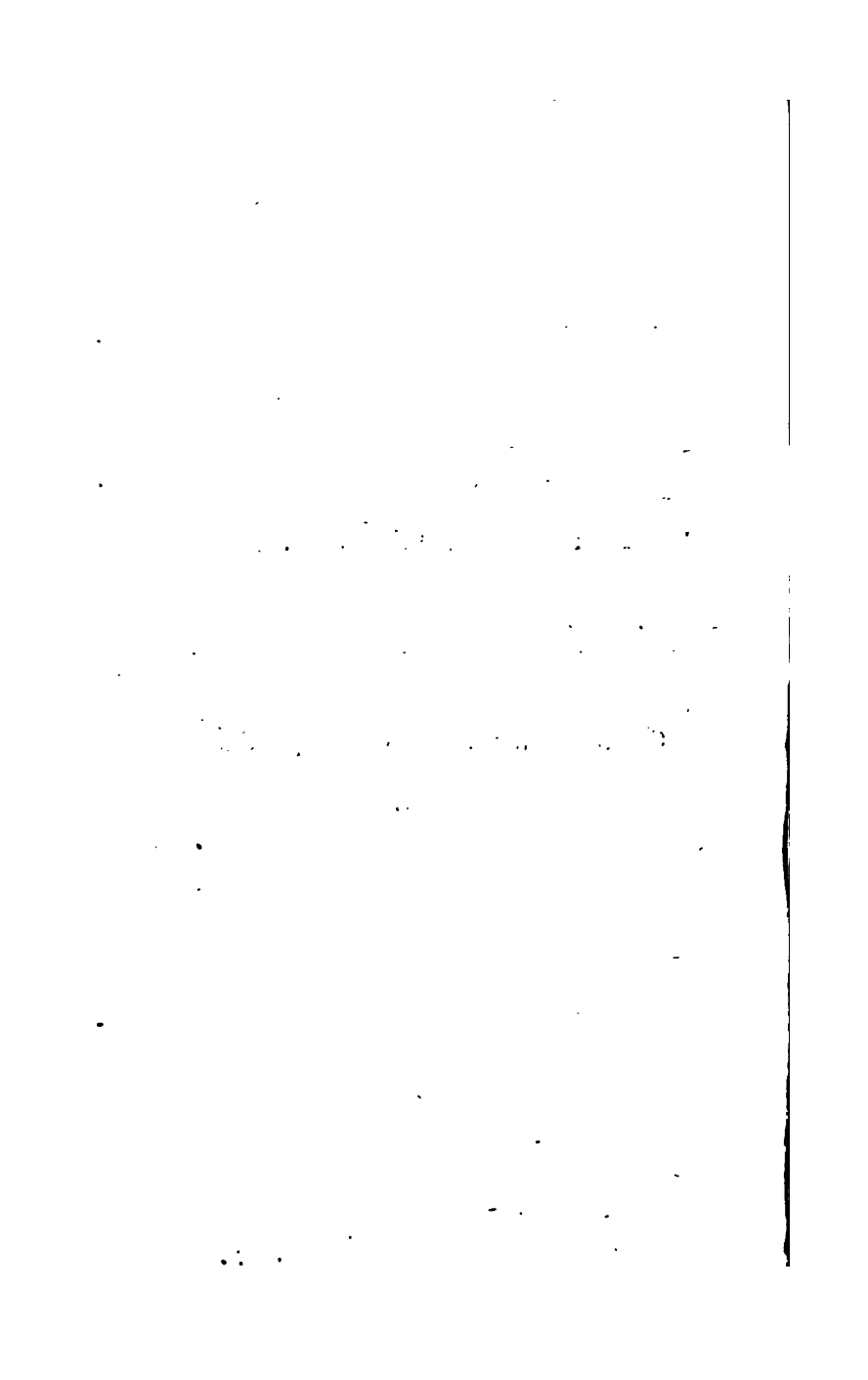
fier fociety ; and as bad company is always ready,——and ever lying in wait,——the career is soon finished ; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the gospel.

S E R-

S E R M O N VI.

National Mercies considered.

On the Inauguration of his present
Majesty.



S E R M O N VI.

DEUTERONOMY VI. 20, 21.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharoah's bondsmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty band.

THESSE are the words which Moses left as a standing answer for the children of Israel to give their posterity, who in time to come might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies, which God had vouchsafed to their forefathers; all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Tho'

Tho' they were directed to speak in this manner, each man to his son, yet one cannot suppose, that the direction should be necessary for the next generation, —for the children of those who had been eye-witnesses of God's Providences : it does not seem likely that any of them should arrive to that age of reasoning, which would put them upon asking the supposed question, and not be, long before-hand, instructed in the answer. Every parent would tell his child the hardships of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance : the story was so uncommon, —so full of wonder, —and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of such transport, it could not possibly be kept a secret : — the piety and gratitude of one generation, would anticipate the curiosity of another ; ——— their sons would learn the story with their language.

This probably might be the case with the first or second race of people, but in process of time, things might take a different

different turn : a long and undisturbed possession of their liberties, might blunt the sense of those providences of God, which had procured them, and set the remembrance of all his mercies, at too great a distance from their hearts. After they had for some years been eased of every real burthen, an excess of freedom might make them restless under every imaginary one, and amongst others that of their religion : from thence they might seek occasion to enquire into the foundation and fitness of it's ceremonies, it's statutes, and its judgments.

They might ask, What meant so many commands in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures ? What policy in ordaining them ? and, What obligation could there lie upon reasonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of such unaccountable injunctions, so unworthy the wisdom of God ?

Here-

Hereafter, possibly, they might go further lengths; and tho' their natural bent was generally towards superstition, yet some adventurers, as is ever the case, might steer for the opposite coast, and as they advanced might discover that all religions of what denominations or complections soever, were alike. That the Religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Priests and Levites,——a phantom dressed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear :——that it's rites and ceremonies, and numberless injunctions, were so many different wheels in the same political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuse the ignorant, and keep them in such a state of darkness, as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, tho' it was unexceptionable in itself——yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not stand in want of; men had natural reason always to have found it out,——and
wisdom

wisdom to have practised it, without Moses's assistance.

Nay, possibly, in process of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controversy——when they had given their system of infidelity all the strength it could admit of from reason, they might begin to embellish it with some more sprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Israelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free scope and indulgence to this talent; as arguments and sober reasoning fail'd, he might turn the edge of his wit against types and symbols, and treat all the mysteries of his religion, and every thing that could be said upon so serious a subject with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleasantry upon many sacred passages of his law; he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen serpent with great courage,——and confound himself in the distinctions
of

of clean and unclean beasts, by the desperate sallies of his wit against them.

He could but possibly take one step further ; when the land which flowed with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impressions of his yoke, and blessings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious conclusion, that there was no Being who was the author and bestower of them, ——— but that it was their own arm, and the mightiness of Israelitish strength which had put them, and kept them in possession of so much happiness.———

O Moses ! How would thy meek and patient spirit have been put to the torture by such a return ? If a propensity towards superstition in the Israelites, did once betray thee into an excess of anger, that thou threwest the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and carelessly hazarded'st the whole treasure of the world, ——— with what indignation and honest anguish wouldst thou

thou have heard the scoffings of those who denied the hand which brought them forth, and said, Who is God, that we should obey his voice ? With what force and vivacity wouldst thou have reproached them with the history of their own nation :——that if too free an enjoyment of God's blessings, had made them forget to look backwards,——it it was necessary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondsmen in Egypt, without prospect of deliverance ; that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a succession of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one struggle for their liberty : That after the expiration of that hopeless period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were snatched almost against their own wills out of the hands of their oppressors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the possession of a land of plenty :——that this change in their affairs, was not the produce of chance or fortune, ——or was it projected

with it into Britain, so early as in the life-time of the apostles themselves,—— or at furthest, not many years after their death.

Tho' this might seem a blessing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in respect of Judea,——its situation and inaccessibleness as an island,——the little that was then known of navigation,——or carried on of commerce,——the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of CHRIST, and almost in the neighbourhood of where the first glad tidings of him were founded——One cannot but adore the goodness of God, and remark a more particular Providence in it's conveyance and establishment here, than amongst other nations upon the continent,—— where, tho' the oppositions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not these natural impediments to encounter.

Histo-

- Historians and statesmen, who generally search every where for the causes of events, but in the pleasure of Him who disposes of them, may make different reflections upon this. They may consider it as a matter incidental, brought to pass by the fortuitous ambition, success and settlement of the Romans here; it appearing that in Claudius's reign, when Christianity began to get footing in Rome, that near eighty thousand of that city and people were fixed in this island: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the gospel was in course open, and it's transition from the one to the other, natural and easy to be accounted for——and yet, nevertheless, providential. God often suffers us to pursue the devices of our hearts, whilst he turns the course of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purposes. Thus, he might make that pursuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and establish it here: he might make the wickedness of the
the

the earth, to work his own righteousness, by suffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purposes were fulfilled, and, *then put his hook into their nostrils*, and lead those wild beasts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this blessing of the light of the gospel, we must not forget that by which it was preserved from the danger of being totally smothered and extinguished, by that vast swarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and shook the world like a tempest; changing names and customs, and language and government, and almost the very face of nature wherever they fixed. That our religion should be preserved at all, when every thing else seemed to perish, which was capable of change,——or, that it should not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and strength,——the whole can be ascribed to no cause so likely as this,
That

That the same power of God which sent it forth, was present to support it——when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preserving Christianity from an utter extinction,——we must reckon that of being enabled to preserve, and free it from corruptions, which the rust of time,——the abuses of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are trusted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was began, by how many strange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not, *entirely without spot or wrinkle*,——at least, without great blotches or marks of anility.

Even the blow which was suffered to fall upon it shortly after, in that period, where our history looks so unlike herself, stained, Mary, by thee, and disfigured,

with blood:——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of God, which so speedily snatched the sword of persecution out of her hand,——making her reign as short as it was mercilefs.

If God then made us, as he did the Israelites, suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more signal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in those good days which followed, when a long and a wise reign was as necessary to build up our church, as a short one was before to save it from ruins.——

——The blessing was necessary,——

——and it was granted.——

God having multiplied the years of that renowned princess to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering persecuted people, and settle them upon such foundation, as must make them happy;——the touch-stone,
by

S E R M O N VI. 123

by which they are to be tried, whom God has entrusted with the care of kingdoms.

Blessed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that test so much easier for the British, than other princes of this earth ; whose subjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have seldom happened upon that of changing their misery, and it is to be feared, are never likely, so long as they are kept so strongly bound in chains of darkness,——and chains of power.

From both these kinds of evils, which are almost naturally connected together, How providential was our escape in the succeeding reign, when all the choice blood was bespoke, and preparations made to offer it up at one sacrifice.

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected festival, with the glories of this ; or name the sorrows of the next reign, which ended in the

subversion of our constitution, was it not necessary to pursue the thread of our deliverances through those times, and remark how high God's Providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as signal a manner, as he restored us from the other.

Indeed the latter of them, might have been a joyless matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a blessing by a succeeding escape, which sealed and conveyed it safe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue sense of former blessings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—we were suffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if God had not raised up a deliverer to lead us back—all had been lost:—the arts of Jesuitry had decoy'd us forwards, or if that had failed, we had been pushed down by open force, and our destruction had been inevitable.

The

The good consequences of that deliverance are such, that it seemed as if God had suffered our waters, like those of Bethesda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us ; since to the account of that day's blessing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing since, worth a free man's living for, —the revival of our liberty, our religion ; the just rights of our kings, —and the just rights of our people, —and along with all, that happy provision for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beseech you, in the way which becomes wise men, by pursuing the intentions of his blessings, and making a better use of them than our forefathers, who sometimes seemed to grow weary of their own happiness : —let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us ; and when we begin to prosper in it, and have built goodly houses and dwelt therein, —and

when our silver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the instances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may in the last day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days set apart to celebrate successful occurrences, unless they influence a nation's morals:——a sinful people never can be grateful to God,——nor can they, properly speaking, be loyal to their prince;——they cannot be grateful to the one,——because they live not under a sense of his mercies,——nor can they be loyal to the other, because they disengage the Providence of God from taking his part,——and then giving a heart to his adversaries to be intractable.——

And therefore, what was said by some one, That every sin was a treason against

gainst the soul, may be applied here,
 —That every wicked man is a traitor
 to his king and his country. And what-
 ever statesmen may write of the causes
 of the rise and fall of nations;—for the
 contrary reasons, a good man will ever
 be found, to be the best patriot and the
 best subject : and tho' an individual may
 say, What can my righteousness profit
 a nation of men ? it may be answered,
 That if it should fail of a blessing here,
 —it will have one advantage at least,
 which is this,

It will save thy own soul ; which may
 God grant. Amen.

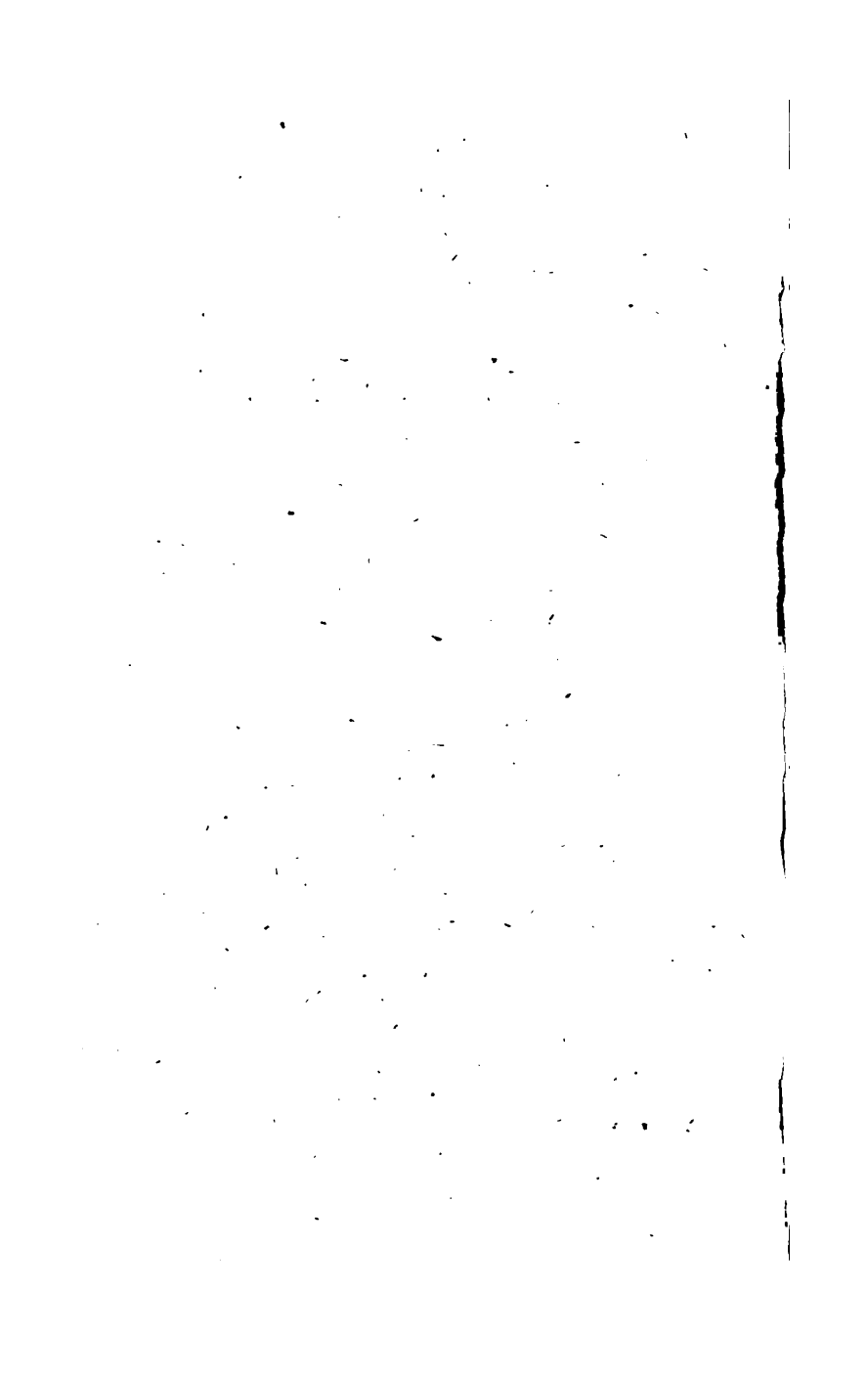
THE
S E R M O N S
OF
Mr. Y O R I C K.
VOL. IV.



D U B L I N :

Printed for W. SMITH and SON, A. LEATHLEY,
J. HOBY, sen. P. WELSON, J. EXSHAW,
H. BRADLEY, E. WATTS, H. SAUNDERS,
W. SLEATER, J. HOBY, jun. J. POTTS,
S. WATSON, and J. WILLIAMS, Booksellers.

MDCCLXVI.



S E R M O N S

BY

LAURENCE STERNE,
A. M. Prebendary of York,
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Forest, and of Stillington
near York.

V O L. IV.



C O N T E N T S.

OF THE

FOURTH VOLUME.

SERMON VII.

The History of Jacob considered.

SERMON VIII.

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S E R-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N X I.

Advantages of Christianity to the World.

S E R M O N X I I.

The Abuses of Conscience considered.

S E R M O N VII.

**The History of J A C O B,
considered.**

row ; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences and evil passions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you'll say, from the same quarter : 'tis true ; but still in some men's lives, there seems a contexture of misery ;——one evil rises out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has so very melancholy an air, that a good natured man shall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch still the more, because, from his first setting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of such different scenes : he was told, by Isaac his father, that *God should bless him with the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine ;—that people were to serve him, and nations to bow down to him ;——that he should be lord over his brethren ;——that blessed was every one that blessed him, and cursed was every one who cursed him.*

The

The simplicity of youth takes promises of happiness in the fullest latitude,—— and as these were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,——it would leave no distrust of their accomplishment, upon his mind;——every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his blessing; ——he would pursue it—— he would grasp a shadow.

This, by the way, makes it necessary to suppose, that the blessings which were conveyed, had a view to blessings not altogether such as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great measure spiritual, and such as the prophetic soul of Isaac had principally before him, in the comprehensive idea of their future and happy establishment, when they were no longer to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth: for in fact, in the strict and literal sense of his father's grant, ——Jacob enjoyed it not; and was so far

These twenty years that I have been with thee,——the yews have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock, have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee,——I bare the loss of it ; what was stolen by day, or stolen by night, of my hands didst thou require it. Thus I was : in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house : ——I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle ; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. w

Scarce had he recovered from these evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children, wound his soul to death.

——Reuben proves incestuous,——Judah adulterous, —— his Daughter Dinah is dishonoured,——Simeon and Levi dishonour themselves by treachery, ——two of his grandchildren are stricken with sudden death,——Rachael his beloved

beloved wife perishes, and in circumstances which imbittered his loss,——his son Joseph, a most promising youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren ; and to close all, himself driven by famine in his old age to die amongst the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch ! well might he say, *That few and evil had been his days* ; the answer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's enquiry, which was simply his age ; —— but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the sorrows which those days had brought along with them ? all that was more in the answer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afresh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digest the evils prepared for it by others ;——for those we prepare ourselves, ——we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered : ——a shattered fortune ——
a shattered

a shattered frame, so we have but the satisfaction of shattering them ourselves, pass naturally enough into the habit, and by the ease with which they are both done, they save the spectator a world of pity: but for those like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—— the avarice of a parent,——the unkindness of a relation,——the ingratitude of a child,——they are evils which leave a scar;——besides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any;——every looker on has an interest in the tragedy;——but then we are apt to interest ourselves no otherwise, than merely as the incidents themselves strike our passions, without carrying the lesson further:——in a word——we realize nothing:——we sigh——we wipe away the tear,——and there ends the story of misery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole

whole turn to the patriarch's life,——parental partiality——or parental injustice,——it matters not by what title it stands distinguished——'tis that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Esau's breast; and an eternal terror with it, in her own, lest she should live to be deprived of them, both in one day——and trust me, dear Christians, wherever that equal balance of kindness and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained——there will daggers ever be planted; *the son shall literally be set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,——and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domestic policy, as of equity, which Moses gave upon this head, in the 21st of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children,

children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the first born son be hers that was hated, then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved, first born, before the son of the hated which is indeed the first born,——but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for first born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced against——for 'tis one of those which steals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under so sweet a form, that thousands have been betrayed by the very virtues which should have preserved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the side of affection ;——but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, she pleads for every child alike——and, Why is not her voice to be heard ? Solomon says, Oppression will make a wise man mad.——What will it do then, to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itself neglected,——too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain ?——see, it sits down
in

in silence, robbed by discouragements,
 of all its natural powers to please,——
 born to see others loaded with caresses
 ——in some uncheary corner it nou-
 rishes it's discontent, ——and with a
 weight upon it's spirits, which it's little
 stock of fortitude is not able to with-
 stand,——it droops and pines away.
 ——Sad victim of Caprice.

We are unavoidably led here into a
 reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard
 to his son Joseph, which no way corres-
 ponded with the lesson of wisdom, which
 the miseries of his own family might
 have taught him : surely his eyes had
 seen sorrows sufficient on that score, to
 have taken warning : and yet we find,
 that he fell into the same snare of parti-
 ality to that child in his old age, which
 his mother Rebekah had shewn to him,
 in hers,—*for Israel loved Joseph more than
 all his children ; because he was the son of
 his old age, and he made him a coat of man-
 ny colours.*——O Israel ! Where was that
 prophetic spirit which darted itself into
 future

future times, and told each tribe what was to be it's fate?—Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look so little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colours*, stained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguish hid from thy eyes?—and, Why is every thing?—but that it pleases heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in possession of it's recompence.—

—Grant me, gracious God! to go chearfully on, the road which thou hast marked out; — I wish it neither more wide or more smooth:—continue the light of this dim taper thou hast put into my hands :——I will kneel upon the ground seven times a day, to seek the best track I can with it— and having done that, I will trust myself and the issue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy, —and will sing songs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the second great occurrence in the patriarch's life.—The imposition of a wife upon him which he neither bargained for or loved.—*And it came to pass in the morning, behold it was Leah ! and he said unto Laban, What is this that thou hast done unto me ? Did I not serve thee for Rachael ? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me ?*

This indeed is out of the system of all conjugal impositions now, — but the moral of it is still good ; and the abuse with the same complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, so long as art and artifice are so busy as they are in these affairs.

Listen, I pray you, to the stories of the disappointed in marriage : — collect all their complaints : — hear their mutual reproaches ; upon what fatal hinge do the greatest part of them turn ? — “ They were mistaken in the person.” — Some disguise either of body or mind is seen through

through in the first domestic scuffle ;——
 some fair ornament —— perhaps the very
 one which won the heart,——*the orna-
 ment of a meek and quiet spirit*, falls off ;
*It is not the Rachael for whom I have
 served,*——*Why hast thou then beguiled
 me ?*

Be open —— be honest : give yourself
 for what you are ; conceal nothing, ——
 varnish nothing, ——and if these fair wea-
 pons will not do, —— better not conquer
 at all, than conquer for a day : ——when
 the night is passed, 'twill ever be the
 same story, ——*And it came to pass,*
behold it was Leah !

If the heart beguiles itself in its choice,
 and imagination will give excellencies
 which are not the portion of flesh and
 blood : ——when the dream is over, and
 we awake in the morning, it matters lit-
 tle whether 'tis Rachael or Leah, ——be
 the object what it will, as it must be on
 the earthly side, at least, of perfection,

—it will fall short of the work of fancy, whose existence is in the clouds.

In such cases of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his, — *What is it thou hast done unto me?* — for 'tis his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiscretion of his own passions.

I know not whether 'tis of any use, to take notice of this singularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Isaac, when the infirmities of old age had disabled him from distinguishing one child from another: *Art thou my very son Esau?* and he said, *I am.* 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the same test, — but both suffered from a similitude of stratagem: and 'tis hard to say, whether the anguish, from crossed love, in the breast of one brother, might not be as sore a punishment,

ment, as the disquietudes of cross'd ambition and revenge in the breast of the other.

I do not see which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,——or, why a man should fall into that very pit, (and no other) which he has *graven and digged for another man* : time and chance may bring such incidents about, and there wants nothing, but that Jacob should have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for such a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the best way to escape evil, is in general, not to commit it ourselves——and that whenever the passions of mankind will order it otherwise, to rob those, at least, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out. —*That our travail has returned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.*

I cannot conclude this discourse, without returning first to the part with which it set out ; ——the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the shortness and misery of his days :——give me leave to bring this home to us, by a single reflection upon each.

There is something strange in it that life should appear so short *in the gross*——and yet so long *in the detail*. Misery may make it so, you'll say——but we will exclude it,——and still you'll find, though we all complain of the shortness of life, what numbers there are who seem quite over-stocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the high ways and streets of the city, to compel guests to come in, and take it off their hands : to do this with ingenuity and forecast, is not one of the least arts and business of life itself ; and they who cannot succeed in it, carry as many marks of distress about them, as bankruptcy herself could wear. Be
as

as careless as we may, we shall not always have the power,——nor shall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cooled, and the spirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire ;——then wisdom will press a moment to be heard,——afflictions or a bed of sickness will find their hours of persuasion——and, should they fail,——there is something yet behind,——old age will overtake us at the last, and with it's trembling hand, hold up the glass to us, as it did unto the patriarch.——

—— Dear inconsiderate Christians ! wait not, I beseech you, till then ;——take a view of your life now ;——look back, behold this fair space capable of such heavenly improvements——all scrawl'd over and defaced with——

——I want words to say, with what——for I think only of the reflections with which you are to support yourselves,

in the decline of a life so miserably cast away, should it happen, as it often does, that ye have stood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform, when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage——speculation and fact appear at variance again.—— We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miserable; and yet the world looks happy enough——and every thing tolerably at his ease. It must be noted indeed, that the patriarch in this account, speaks merely his present feelings, and seems rather to be giving a history of his sufferings, than a system of them, in contradiction to that of the God of Love; Look upon the world he has given us;——observe the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to satisfy the desires of the temperate,——but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almost a paradise; planted when nature was in her gayest humour.

——Every

—Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one section of the globe, —and this representation another : ——— truth lieth betwixt ——— or rather, good and evil are mixed together ; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry ; — but, I trust ——— it is the good : ——— first, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me ; and secondly, Because I will not suppose, that a work intended to exalt his glory, should stand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of misery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increase the complaint, ——— or to affect the praise which the Jesuit's college of Granado, give of their *Sansbar*, ——— That though he lived where there was a very sweet garden, yet, was never seen to touch a flower ; and that he would rather die than eat salt or pepper, or ~~ought~~ that might give a relish to his meat.

I pity the men whose natural pleasures are burthens, and who fly from joy, (as these splenetic and morose souls do) as if it was really an evil in itself.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis sorrow and heaviness of heart.—The loss of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occasion sorrow ;—take that out—the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the causes of anguish in the heart were not enow—but he must fill up the measure, with those of caprice ; and not only walk in a vain shadow, —but disquiet himself in vain too.

We are a restless set of beings ; and as we are likely to continue so to the end of the world—the best we can do in it, is to make the same use of this

this part of our character, which wise men do of other bad propensities——when they find they cannot conquer them,——they endeavour, at least, to divert them into good channels.

If therefore we must be a solicitous race of self-tormentors,——let us drop the common objects which make us so,——and for God's sake be solicitous only to live well.

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the team.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources needed to complete each task.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the outcomes against the objectives and goals and identifying any areas for improvement.

S E R M O N VIII.

**The Parable of the
RICH MAN and LAZARUS
confidered.**



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SERMON VIII.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one should rise from the dead.

THESE words are the conclusion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the design of which was to shew us the necessity of conducting ourselves, by such lights as God had been pleased to give us : the sense and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being this, That they who will not be persuaded to answer the great purposes of their being, upon such arguments as are offered to them in scripture, will never be persuaded to it by any other means,
how

how extraordinary soever; ——— *If they bear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.* ———

——— Rise from the dead! To what purpose? What could such a messenger propose or urge, which had not been proposed and urged already? the novelty or surprize of such a visit might awaken the attention of a curious unthinking people, who spent their time in nothing else, but to hear and tell some new thing; but ere the wonder was well over, some new wonder would start up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came and not a soul make one enquiry about him.

——— This, I fear, would be the conclusion of the affair. But to bring this matter still closer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that God in compliance with a curious world, ——— or from a better motive, ——— in com-
passion

SERMON VIII. 33

passion to a sinful one should vouchsafe to send one from the dead, to call home our conscience and make us better Christians, better citizens, better men, and better servants to God than what we are.

Now bear with me, I beseech you, in framing such an address, as I imagine, would be most likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to say: the great channel to it, is Interest, ——— and there he would set out.

He might tell us, (after the most indisputable credentials of whom he served) That he was come a messenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated proposals, whereby much was to be granted us on his side, ——— and something to be parted with on ours: but, that, not to alarm us, ——— 'twas neither houses, nor land, nor possessions; ——— 'twas neither wives, or children, or brethren, or sisters, which we had
to

to forsake;——no one rational pleasure to be given up;——no natural endearment to be torn from.——

——In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with——but what was not for our interests to keep,——and that was our Vices, which brought death and misery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thousand arguments, that to be temperate and chaste, and just and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another,——was only doing that for CHRIST's sake, which was most for our own; and that were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would submit to his government,——he would convince us, 'twould be impossible for the wit of man, to frame any proposals more for our present interests, than *to lead an uncorrupted life* —— *to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay such restraints upon our appetites as are for the honour
of

of human nature, and the refinement of human happiness.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from Interest got over,——the spectre might address himself to the other passions,——in doing this, he could but give us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of God,——or could he do more, than impress the most awful ones, of his majesty and power :——he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, hastening to the place from whence we shall not return ;——that during our stay, we stood accountable to this Being, who tho' rich in mercies,——yet was terrible in his judgments ;——that he took notice of all our actions ;——that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and spied out all our ways ; and was so pure in his nature, that he would punish even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had appointed a day, wherein he would enter into this enquiry.——

He

He might add——

But what?——with all the eloquence of an inspired tongue, What could he add or say to us, which has not been said before? the experiment has been tried a thousand times upon the hopes and fears, the reasons and passions of men, by all the powers of nature,——the application of which have been so great, and the variety of addresses so unanswerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that so good a religion should be no better recommended by it's professors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced,——and so long as the pre-engagement with our passions subsists, it is not argumentation which can do the business,——we may amuse ourselves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reason not with the proper faculty, when we see every thing in the shape and colouring, in which the treachery

treachery of the senses paint it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and observe how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,—one would think, at first sight, they believed, that all discourses of religion and virtue were mere matters of speculation, for men to entertain some idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we seemed to be agreed in no one thing, but speaking well—and acting ill. But the truest comment is in the text,—*If they bear not Moses and the prophets, &c.*

If they are not brought over to the interests of religion upon such discoveries as God has made—or has enabled them to make, they will stand out against all evidence: ——— in vain shall *one* rise for their conviction; ——— was the earth to give up her dead——’twould be the same; ——— every man would return again to his course, and the same bad passions would produce the same bad actions to the end of the world.

This

This is the principal lesson of the parable; but I must enlarge upon the whole of it—because it has some other useful lessons, and they will best present themselves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the most remarkable in the gospel, our SAVIOUR represents a scene, in which, by a kind of contrast, two of the most opposite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are passed before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the highest pinnacle of prosperity,——to riches——to happiness.——I say, *happiness*,——in compliance with the world, and on a supposition, that the possession of riches must make us happy, when the very pursuit of them so warms our imaginations, that we stake both body and soul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchased at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wisdom,——as well

well as of folly. — Whatever was the case here, is, beyond the purport of the parable;—the scripture is silent, and so should we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite: — to gratify the one, he was cloathed in purple and fine linen: to satisfy the other, — fared sumptuously every day; — and upon every thing to — we'll suppose, that climates could furnish — that luxury could invent, or the hand of science could torture.

Close by his gates is represented an object whom Providence might seem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and shew him to what wretchedness his condition might be brought: a creature in all the shipwreck of nature, — helpless — undone, — in want of friends, in want of health, — and in want of every thing with them which his distresses called for.

Am

In this state he is described as desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and tho' the case is not expressly put, that he was refused, yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the historical part of the parable, — or pleaded after by the other, that he shewed mercy to the miserable, we may conclude his request was unsuccessful, — like too many others in the world, either so high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down distinctly enough upon the sufferings of their fellow creatures, — or by long surfeiting in a continual course of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is such a distemper as hunger, in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps, a thousand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhospitable world, the poor man sinks silently under his burden.

—— But good God! whence is this? Why dost thou suffer these hardships in
a world

a world which thou hast made? Is it for thy honour, that one man should eat the bread of fulness, and so many of his own stock and lineage eat the bread of sorrow? -----That this man should go clad in purple, and have all his paths strewed with rose-buds of delight, whilst so many mournful passengers go heavily along, and pass by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy Glory, O God! that so large a shade of misery should be spread across thy works?-----or, Is it that we see but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is seen;---when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the distressful incidents of this Drama shall be unravell'd; -----when every man's case shall be reconsidered-----then wilt thou be fully justified in all thy ways, and every mouth shall be stopped.

After a long day of mercy, mispent in riot and uncharitableness, the rich man died also:-----the parable adds,-----

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I

and

and was buried;—Buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to prostitute upon those occasions.

But this was the last vain show; the utter conclusion of all his epicurean grandeur;—the next is a scene of horror, where he is represented by our SAVIOUR, in a state of the utmost misery, from whence he is supposed to lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.——

——That he had received his good things,——'twas from heaven,——and could be no reproach: with what severity soever the scripture speaks against riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring sumptuously every day, was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it
is

is a real part of a vicious character: the case might be then, as now: his quality and station in the world might be supposed to be such, as not only to have justified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of stations there must be in the world, which must be supported by such marks of distinction as custom imposes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is described to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, with thirty measures of fine flour, and three score measures of meal, for the daily provision of his table; —all this is not laid to him as a sin, but rather remarked as an instance of God's blessing to him; —and whenever these things are otherwise, 'tis from a wastful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends, —and oft times, to the very opposite ones for which they were granted, —to glad the heart, to

open it, and render it more kind.——

And this seems to have been the snare the rich man had fallen into——and possibly, had he fared less sumptuously,——he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better disposed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compassion for it.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.

——Remember! sad subject of recollection! that a man has passed through this world with all the blessings and advantages of it on his side,——favoured by God Almighty with riches,——befriended by his fellow creatures in the means of acquiring them,——assisted every hour by the society of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them——to remember, how much he has received,——how little he has bestowed,——that he has been no man's friend,——no one's protector,——no one's benefactor,——blessed God!——

Thus

Thus begging in vain for himself, he is represented at last as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be sent to them to give them warning, and save them from the ruin which he had fallen into;—*they have Moses and the prophets,* was the answer of the patriarch;—*let them hear them;* but the unhappy man is represented, as discontented with it; and still persisting in his request, and urging,—*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

—He thought so—but Abraham knew otherwise: and the grounds of the determination, I have explained already, — so shall proceed to draw some other conclusions and lessons from the parable.

And first, our SAVIOUR might further intend to discover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expose mankind, agreeably to what is elsewhere declared, how hardly shall they

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who have them, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a blessing for God to trust us with, or we to manage: they surround us at all times with ease, with nonsense, with flattery, and false friends, with which thousands and ten thousands have perished: —they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherously to conceal them from us; —they hourly administer to our temptations; —and allow us neither time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them: —nay, what is strange, do they not often tempt men even to covetousness; and tho' amidst all the ill offices which riches do us, one would last suspect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other; yet so it is, that many a man contracts his spirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But

But there is less need to preach against this: we seem all to be hastening to the opposite extreme of luxury and expense: we generally content ourselves with the solution of it; and say, 'Tis a natural consequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a mistake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cause of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads so many thousands on with an affectation of possessing more than they have,—and consequently of engaging in a system of expences they cannot support.

In one word, 'tis the necessity of *appearing* to be somebody, in order to be so—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another lesson in the parable, concerning the true use and application

plication of riches; we may be sure from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ those talents as God intended.——

How God did intend them,——may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inscription you shall read there,——as from any chapter and verse I might cite upon the subject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and consider the traces which even the most insensible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive springing up within him from some casual act of generosity; and tho' this is a pleasure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;——let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight arising in the mind from the conscience of a humane action.

But

But to know it right, we must call upon the compassionate;——Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleasure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleasures, is of a relative nature, and consequently the enjoyment of it, requires some qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does: ——there must be something antecedent in the disposition and temper which will render that good,——a good to that individual; otherwise, tho' 'tis true it may be possessed,——yet it never can be enjoyed.

Consider how difficult you would find it to convince a miserly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable; or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleasant.

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modell'd both mind and body to no other happiness, but good eating and drinking, ——bid him *taste and see how good God is:*

——there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind must be like your proposition before it can be relished; and 'tis the resemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your side.

'Tis therefore not to the cruel,——
'tis to the merciful;——to those who rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,—— that we make this appeal:——'tis to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the sad * story of the fatherless, and of him who hath no helper, and bespeak your alms-giving in behalf of those, who know not how to ask for it themselves.

——What can I say more?——it is a subject on which I cannot inform your judgment,—— and in such an audience, I would not presume to practise upon your passions: let it suffice to say, that they whom God hath blessed with the means,
——and.

* Charity Sermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

—and for whom he has done more, in blessing them likewise with a disposition; have abundant reason to be thankful to him, as the author of every good gift, for the measure he has bestowed to them of both: 'tis the refuge against the stormy wind and tempest, which he has planted in our hearts; and the constant fluctuation of every thing in this world, force all the sons and daughters of Adam to seek shelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and settlements as we will, the most affluent plenty may be stripp'd, and find all its worldly comforts like so many withered leaves dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be shaken; and the greatest that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one,----- may happen to every man; and therefore, that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing else, should govern us;---*That whatsoever*
ye

ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them.

Haft thou ever laid upon the bed of languishing, or laboured under a distemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy sorrowful and pensive spirit at that time, and say, What it was that made the thoughts of death so bitter:—if thou hadst children,—I affirm it, the bitterness of death lay there; if unbrought up, and unprovided for, What will become of them? Where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will stand up for them and plead their cause against the wicked?

-----Blessed God! to thee, who art a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow,-----I entrust them.

Haft thou ever sustained any considerable shock in thy fortune? or, has the scantiness of thy condition hurried thee into great straits, and brought thee almost to distraction? Consider what was it that
spread

spread a table in that wilderness of thought,----who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of consolation who stepped in,---saw thee embarrassed with tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,---took them under his protection?--Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!--and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehensions of a parent's love.

Haft thou-----

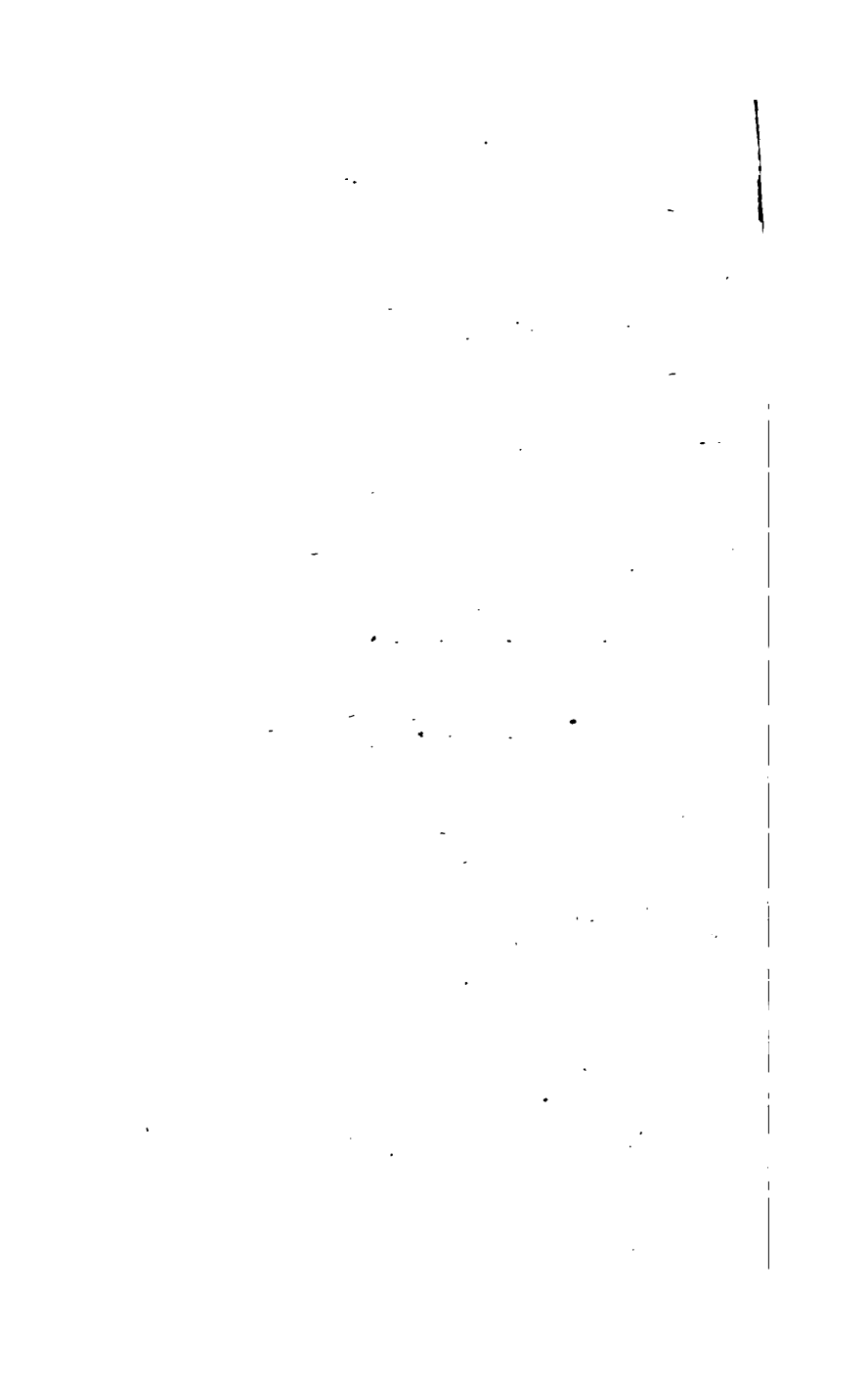
----But how shall I ask a question which must bring tears into so many eyes?---
 Haft thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner still, by the loss of a most obliging friend,---or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child by the stroke of death?----bitter remembrance! nature droops at it,---but nature is the same in all conditions and lots of life.----A child thrust forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of instruction, and the means of its salvation, is a subject of more tender
 heart

heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature:—as we have felt for ourselves,—let us feel for CHRIST'S sake—let us feel for theirs: and may the God of all comfort bless you. Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N IX.

Pride.



SERMON IX.

LUKE XIV. 10, 11.

But, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that had thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher, then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee: for whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR'S to Humility, addressed by way of inference from what he had said in the three foregoing verses of the chapter; where, upon entering into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread, and marking how small a portion of this necessary virtue entered in with the several

veral guests, discovering itself from their choosing the chief rooms and most distinguished places of honour ;——he takes the occasion which such a behaviour offered, to caution them against Pride ;——states the inconvenience of the passion ;——shews the disappointments which attend it ;——the disgrace in which it generally ends ; in being forced at last, to recede from the pretensions to what is more than our due ; which, by the way, is the very thing the passion is eternally promoting us to expect. When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, says our SAVIOUR, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him ; and he that bad thee and him, come and say to thee,——Give this man place : and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

——But thou, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room :
 ——hard lecture !——In the lowest room ?——What, —do I owe nothing
 to

to myself? Must I forget my station, my character in life? Relinquish the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in possession of? — give all up, and suffer inferiors to take my honour? Yes; — for that, says our SAVIOUR, is the road to it: *For when he that had thee cometh, he will say to thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee: — for whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not necessary we should look beyond this life, and say, That in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing shall be brought low, and every irregular passion dealt with as it deserves; — that pride, amongst the rest, (considered as a vicious character) shall meet with it's proper punishment of being abased, and lying down for ever in shame and dishonour. — It is not

not necessary we should look so far forwards for the accomplishment of this: the words seem not so much to imply the threat of a distant punishment, the execution of which was to be respited to that day;—as the declaration of a plain truth depending upon the natural course of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world; from whence, as well as from our reasoning upon the point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to so many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature rests secure from,—that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of men's passions; which, tho' very bad executioners in general, yet are so far just ones in this, that they seldom suffer the exultations of an insolent temper to escape the abasement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deserve.

In other vicious excesses which a man commits, the world (tho' it is not much to its credit) seems to stand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greatest enemy to yourself,——or if an enemy to the public,——at least, you are so remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himself immediately concerned in your punishment: but in the instances of pride, the attack is personal: for as this passion can only take its rise from a secret comparison, which the party has been making of himself to my disadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is so far a direct injury, either as it with-holds the respect which is my due,——or perhaps denies me to have any; or else, which presses equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: in every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it,——if
it

it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean estimation and possibly a very unfair one of the like pretensions in myself,——the attack, I say, is personal; and has generally the fate to be felt and resented as such.

So that with regard to the present inconveniencies, there is scarce any vice bating such as are immediately punished by laws, which a man may not indulge with more safety to himself, than this one of pride;——the humblest of men, not being so entirely void of the passion themselves, but that they suffer so much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accomplishment of the text, a common interest and concern: in which they are generally successful;——the nature of the vice being such, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occasions itself of its own humiliation.

The proud man——see!——he is fore all over; touch him——you put him to pain: and tho' of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all sense and feeling, yet is possessed with so nice and exquisite a one himself, that the flights, the little neglects and instances of disesteem, which would be scarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man, was it only for this, that it should not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chastise me;——my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at least will not incommode me:——so little discountenance do I see given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I suffer by them:——but here——if I exalt myself, I have no prospect of escaping;——with this vice I stand sworn up in every body's way, and must unavoidably be thrust back: which ever way

way I turn, whatever step I take under the direction of this passion, I press unkindly upon some one, and in return, must prepare myself for such mortifying repulses, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way sorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whose observation upon it was the same,——and it will ever hold good, *that before honour was humility, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*——*Put not therefore thyself forth in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:——for better is it*——(which by the way is the very dissuasive in the text)——*better is it, that it be said unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.*

Thus much for the illustration of this one argument of our SAVIOUR'S, against Pride:——there are many other considerations which expose the weakness of it, which

which his knowledge of the heart of man might have suggested; but as the particular occasion which gave rise to this lecture of our SAVIOUR's against pride, naturally led him to speak of the mortifications which attend such instances of it as he then beheld:——for this reason the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a set discourse would be doing injustice to the subject. I shall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer some other considerations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this subject, as so many inducements to check this weak passion in man; which, tho' one of the most inconvenient of his infirmities,——the most painful and discourteous to society, yet by a sad fatality, so it is, that there are few vices, except such whose temptations are immediately seated in our natures, to which there is so general a propensity throughout the whole race.

This had led some satyrical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom
 VOL. IV. K were

were proud alike;——that one man differed from another, not so much in the different portions which he possessed of it, as in the different art and address by which he excels in the management and disguise of it to the world: we trample, no doubt too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole the remark has more spleen than truth in it; there being thousands, (if any evidence is to be allowed) of the most unaffected humility, and truest poverty of spirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithstanding this, so much may be allowed to the observation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in society so insensibly;——steals in unobserved upon the heart upon so many occasions;——forms itself upon such strange pretensions, and when it has done, veils itself under such a variety of unsuspected appearances,——sometimes even under that of Humility itself;——in all which cases, Self-love, like a false friend, instead of checking, most treacherously feeds this humour,——points out some excellence

lence in every soul to make him vain, and think more highly of himself, than he ought to think;——that upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betray'd,——or which requires greater helps of good sense and good principles to guard against.

And first, the root from which it springs, is no inconsiderable discredit to the fruit.

If you look into the best moral writers, who have taken pains to search into the grounds of this passion,——they will tell you, That Pride is the vice of little and contracted souls;——that whatever affectation of greatness it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanness in the heart of it:—a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge;——like *poor* relations, they look a little shy at one another at first sight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the same stem;

and there is scarce any one who has not seen many such instances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable stroke he has given of this affinity, in his description of a *Pride which licks the dust*.

As it has *meanness* at the bottom of it, ———so it is justly charged with having *weakness* there too, of which it gives the strongest proof, in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the absurd means it takes to bring it about.

Consider a moment, ———What is it the proud man aims at? ———Why, —such a measure of respect and deference, as is due to his superior merit, &c. &c.

Now, good sense, and a knowledge of the world shew us, that how much soever of these are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation, ———they are still dues of such a nature, that they are not to be insisted upon: Honour and Respect must be a *Free-will offering*: treat them otherwise, and claim them from the world

world as a tax,—they are sure to be withheld; the first discovery of such an expectation disappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this speculative argument of it's weakness, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more substantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no less a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal sense of the expression—in sober truth, 'tis but a scurvy kind of a trick (*quoties voluit Fortuna jocari*)—when Fortune in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this passion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as she can get him,—for it is sure to make him play such phantastic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the representation.

A third argument against pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unocial aspect: the Scripture seldom introduces it alone——Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or some inimical passion, is ever upon the stage with it; the proofs and reasons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore shall say no more upon this argument than this,——that as there no other,——yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be sufficient by itself to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral considerations upon this subject; a great part of which, as they illustrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride in a social light, may seem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the passion itself, and root it out of their nature: so do this effectually we must add the arguments of religion, without which the best moral discourse may prove no better than a cold political lecture,

lecture, taught merely to govern the passion so, as not to be injurious to a man's present interest or quiet; all which a man may learn to practise well enough, and yet at the same time be a perfect stranger to the best part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an absolute conquest over the first risings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And first, one of the most persuasive arguments which religion offers to this end, is that which arises from the state and condition of ourselves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impossible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!*—*even a thing of nought*——a poor, infirm, miserable, short-lived creature, that passes away like a shadow, and is hastening off the stage where the theatrical titles and distinctions, and the whole mask of Pride which he has worn for a day will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected slave. Send forth your imagination, I

beseech you, to view the last scene of the greatest and proudest who ever awed and governed the world—see the empty vapour disappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment sticks fast within him: see—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and spirits.

——Approach his bed of state ——
lift up the curtain —— regard a moment with silence ——

——are these cold hands and pale lips, all that is left of him who was canonized by his own pride, or made a god of, by his flatterers?

O my soul! with what dreams hast thou been bewitched? how hast thou been deluded by the objects thou hast so eagerly grasped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheless strike a damp upon human Pride, much more must
the

the considerations do so, which arise from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourselves, my dear Christians, a few moments in this light——behold a disobedient, ungrateful, intractable and disorderly set of creatures, going wrong seven times in a day,——acting sometimes every hour of it against your own convictions——your own interests, and the intentions of your God, who wills and proposes nothing but your happiness and prosperity——what reason does this view furnish you for Pride? how many does it suggest to mortify and make you ashamed?——well might the son of Syrach say in that sarcastical remark of his upon it, *That PRIDE was not made for man*——for some purposes, and for some particular beings, the passion might have been shaped——but not for him——fancy it where you will, 'tis no where so improper——'tis in no creature so unbecoming——

———But why so cold an assent, to so uncontested a truth?——Perhaps thou hast reasons to be proud :——for heaven's sake, let us hear them—Thou hast the advantages of birth and title to boast of—or thou standest in the sunshine of court favour—or thou hast a large fortune — or great talents—or much learning——or nature has bestowed her graces upon thy person———speak—on which of these foundations hast thou raised this fanciful structure?———Let us examine them.

Thou art well born ;———then trust me, 'twill pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble : humility calls no man down from his rank,———divests not princes of their titles ; it is in life, what the *clear-obscure* is in painting ; it makes the hero step forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwise stand confounded for ever.

If

If thou art rich——then shew the greatness of thy fortune,——or what is better, the greatness of thy soul in the meekness of thy conversation; condescend to men of low estate,——support the distressed, and patronize the neglected.——Be great; but let it be in considering riches as they are; as *talents committed to an earthen vessel*——That thou art but the *receiver*,——and that to be obliged and be vain to,——is but the old solecism of pride and beggary, which though they often meet,——yet ever make but an absurd society.

If thou art powerful in interest, and standest deified by a servile tribe of dependents,——why shouldest thou be proud——because they are hungry?——Scourge me such sycophants; they have turned the heads of thousands as well as thine.——

——But 'tis thy own dexterity and strength which have gained thee this eminence :

nence :—allow it ; but art thou proud, that thou standest in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge, ——— where good men may be ready to suspect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down. I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain : Haman was so, because he was admitted alone to queen Esther's banquet ; and the distinction raised him, ——— but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dreamed or thought of. :

Let us pass on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou hast a little, thou wilt be proud of it in course : if thou hast much, and good sense along with it, there will be no reason to dispute against the passion : a beggarly parade of remnants is but a sorry object of Pride at the best ; ——— but more so, when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet, ——— *Alas !*

—————* *Alas ! Master,* ————— *for it was borrowed.*

It is treason to say the same of Beauty, ————— whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to set it off : the weakest minds are most caught with both ; being ever glad to win attention and credit from small and slender accidents, thro' disability of purchasing them by better means. In truth, Beauty has so many charms, one knows not how to speak against it ; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous soul, ————— when the beauty of the face speaks out the modesty and humility of the mind, and the justness of the proportion raises our thoughts up to the art and wisdom of the great Creator, ————— something may be allowed it, ————— and something to the embellishments which set it off ; ————— and yet, when the whole apology is read, —————

* 2 Kings, 6, 7.

it

it will be found at last, that Beauty like Truth, never is so glorious as when it goes the plainest.

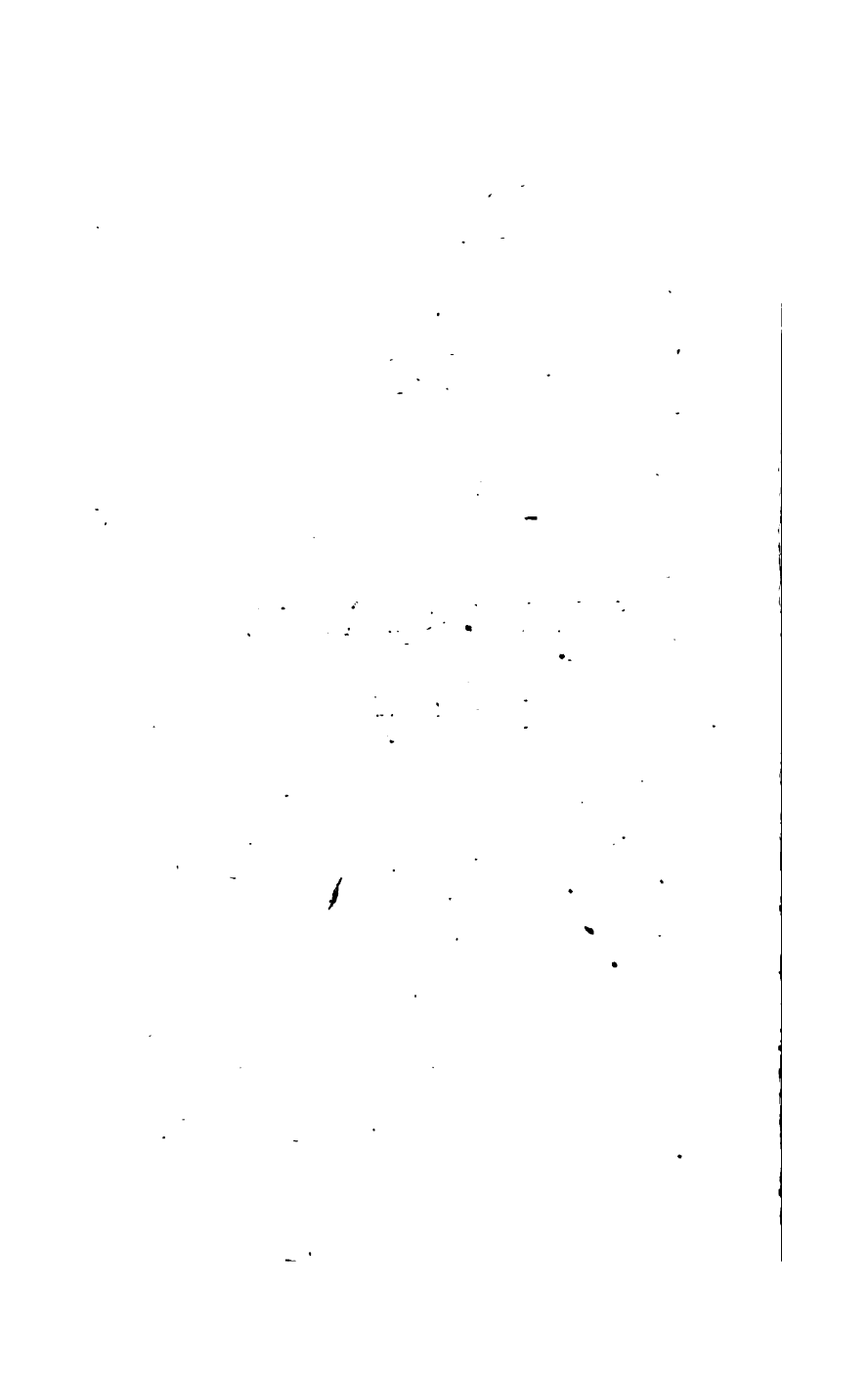
Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this silly world, it should be of this honest alliance.

Consider what has been said ; and may the God of all mercies and kindness watch over your passions, and inspire you *with all humbleness of mind, meekness, patience, and long-suffering.*—
Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N X.

Humility.



S E R M O N X.

MATTHEW xi. 29.

*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly
in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto
your souls.*

TH E great business of man, is the regulation of his spirit : the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of, ——— *Rest unto our souls.* ———

—————*Rest unto our souls!* ——— 'tis all we want ——— the end of all our wishes and pursuits : give us a prospect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly

fly to the uttermost parts of the earth to have it in possession : we seek for it in titles, in riches and pleasures,——climb up after it by ambition,——come down again and stoop for it by avarice,——try all extremes ; still we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miserable experiments, that we are convinced at last, we have been seeking every where for it, but where there was a prospect of finding it ; and that is, within ourselves, in a meek and lowly disposition of heart. This, and this only will give us rest unto our souls ; —— rest, from those turbulent and haughty passions which disturb our quiet :—— rest, from the provocations and disappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, against all which this frame and preparation of mind is the best protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Consider how great a share of the uneasinesses which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their rise to

to nothing else, but the dispositions of mind which are opposite to this character.

With regard to the provocations, and offences, which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world, ——— take it as a rule ——— as a man's pride is, ——— so is always his displeasure; ——— as the opinion of himself rises, ——— so does the injury, ——— so does his resentment: 'tis this which gives edge and force to the instrument which has struck him, — and excites that heat in the wound, which renders it incurable.

See how different the case is, with the humble man: one half of these painful conflicts he actually escapes; the other part fall lightly on him; — he provokes no man by contempt; thrusts himself forward as the mark of no man's envy; so that he cuts off the first fretful occasions of the greatest part of these evils; and for those in which the passions of others would involve him, like the
humble

humble shrub in the valley, gently gives way, and scarce feels the injury of those stormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by it's roots.

If you consider it, with regard to the many disappointments of this life, which arise from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world, ——— the reasoning is the same.

What we expect——is ever in proportion to the estimate made of ourselves ; when pride and self-love have brought us in their account of this matter,——we find, that we are worthy of all honours ——fit for all places and employments : ——as our expectations rise and multiply, so must our disappointments with them ; and there needs nothing more, to lay the foundation of our unhappiness, and both to make and keep us miserable. And in truth there is nothing so common in life, as to see thousands, whom you would say, had all the reason in the world to be at rest,

rest, so torn up and disquieted with sorrows of this class, and so incessantly tortured with the disappointments which their pride and passions have created for them, that tho' they appear to have all the ingredients of happiness in their hands,——they can neither compound or use them :——How should they ? the goad is ever in their sides, and so hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no rest day or night.

Humility therefore, recommends itself as a security against these heart-aches, which tho' ridiculous sometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are serious enough to the man who suffers them ; and I believe would make no inconsiderable account in a true catalogue of the disquietudes of mortal man : against these, I say, Humility is the best defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his desires, and consequently moderate in his pursuit of them : like
another

another man, he may fail in his attempts and lose the point he aimed at,—but that is all,—he loses not himself,—he loses not his happiness and peace of mind with it,—even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.—Blessed character! when such a one is thrust back, who does not pity him?—when he falls, who would not stretch out a hand to raise him up.

And here, I cannot help stopping in the midst of this argument, to make a short observation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility,—we are apt to think it stands the most naked and defenceless of all virtues whatever,—the least able to support its claims against the insolent antagonist who seems ready to bear him down, and all opposition which such a temper can make.

Now

Now, if we consider him as standing alone;—no doubt, in such a case he will be over-powered and trampled upon by his opposer;—but if we consider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendship and wishes of all mankind,—that the other stands alone, hated, discountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wisher on his side;—when this is balanced; we shall have reason to change our opinion, and be convinced that the humble man strengthened with such an alliance, is far from being so over-matched as at first sight he may appear;—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all such cases, where real fortitude and true personal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would sooner look for it in such a temper than in that of his adversary. Pride may make a man violent, but Humility will make him firm:—and which of the two, do you think, likely to

to come off with honour?—
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inheritance by the appointment
For if, as Job says, we are born

SERMON X.

ble as the sparks fly upwards, surely it is
he who thinks the greatest of himself, re-
bles below his sins, — and whose in-
favours above his merit, that is least
suffer the least from the one, — and enjoys
the most from the other : — and who
possesses his soul in meekness, — and keeps
it subjected to all the afflictions, — and keeps
that is the farthest out of himself.

—No. — He blames more the sea,
though it does not ripen his rice, —
blusters at the winds, though they bring
him no profit. — If the humble
the humble man rises not as high as
could wish, — he thinks himself
it rises as high as it ought, and as the
laws of nature fill his heart, and as the
he has no cause to complain against
them.

He is disappointed of riches — he knows
the providence of God is not in riches,
that though he has received his share,
there, yet as he is contented with it,
the least, he has no cause to complain.

VOL. IV

to come off with honour?——he, who acts from the changeable impulse of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,——or the man who stands cool and collected in himself; who governs his resentments, instead of being governed by them, and on every occasion acts upon the steady motives of principle and duty.

But this by the way; —— though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the observation is just, and Humility has the advantages where we should least expect them, the argument rises higher in behalf of those which are more apparently on it's side.——In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man must never hope for in this world, —that is *rest to his soul*,—so does helikewise meet with it from the influence such a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance by the appointment of God. For if, as Job says, we are born to trouble

ble

ble as the sparks fly upwards, surely it is he who thinks the greatest of these troubles below his sins,—and the smallest favours above his merit, that is likely to suffer the least from the one, and enjoy the most from the other : 'tis he who possesses his soul in meekness, and keeps it subjected to all the issues of fortune, that is the farthest out of their reach. —No.——He blames not the sun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor blusters at the winds, though they bring him no profit.——If the fountain of the humble man rises not as high as he could wish,——he thinks however, that it rises as high as it ought, and as the laws of nature still do their duty, that he has no cause to complain against them.

If disappointed of riches——he knows the providence of God is not his debtor ; that though he has received less than others, yet as he thinks himself less than the least, he has reason to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other respects,——he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world was not made for him; and therefore how little share soever he has of its advantages, he sees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of sin, of ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A soul thus turned and resigned, is carried smoothly down the stream of providence; no temptations in his passage disquiet him with desire,——no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others,——yet by seeing the justice of what happens,——and humbly giving way to the blow,——though he is smitten, he is not smitten like other men, or feels the smart which they do.

Thus

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility ; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is observed by some one, that as pride was the passion through which sin and misery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, when he entered upon the work of our restoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed ; and this he did, by endeavouring to bring the soul of man back to its original temper of Humility ; so that his first public address from the Mount began with a declaration of blessedness to the poor in spirit,—and almost his last exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had set them of this virtue, and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the most unanswerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, ——— and so persuasive and accommodated to all Christians, that as much pride as there is still in the world, it is not credible but that every believer must receive some tincture of the character or bias towards it from the example of so great, and yet so humble a Master, whose whole course of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every instance of it shewed, that he came not to share the pride and glories of life, or swell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to cast a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himself rather as a servant than a master, ——— coming, as he continually declared, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful description of him, ——— to have no form, or comeliness, nor any beauty that they should desire him. ——— The voluntary meanness of his birth, ——— the poverty of his life, ——— the low offices in which it was engaged, in
preach.

ing the Gospel to the poor,—the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head, —all spoke the same language ;—that the God of truth should submit to the suspicion of an imposture :—his humble deportment under that, and a thousand provocations of a thankless people, still raises this character higher ;—and what exalts it to it's highest pitch,——the tender and pathetic proof he gave of the same disposition at the conclusion and great catastrophe of his suffering,——when a life full of so many instances of humility was crowned with the most endearing one of *humbling himself even to the death of the cross* ;—the death of a slave, —— a malefactor, —— drag'd to *Calvary* without opposition, ——insulted without complaint.

—— Blessed Jesus ! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart ? ——how can he but profit when such

a lesson was seconded——by such an example.

If humility shines so bright in the character of CHRIST, so does it in that of his religion ; the true spirit of which tends all the same way.——christianity, when rightly explained and practised, is all meekness and candour, and love and courtesy ; and there is no one passion our SAVIOUR rebukes so often, or with so much sharpness, as that one, which is subversive of these kind effects,—and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, necessarily leads us on to a discourteous opinion and treatment of others.—I say, *necessarily*, — because 'tis a natural consequence, and the progress from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our SAVIOUR often remarks in the character of the Pharisees :——they trusted in themselves,—'twas no wonder then they despised others.

This,

This, I believe, might principally relate to spiritual pride, which by the way, is the worst of all prides ; and as it is a very bad species of a very bad passion, I cannot do better than conclude the discourse with some remarks upon it.

In most conceits of a religious superiority, there has usually gone hand in hand with it, another fancy,—which—I suppose has fed it—and that is, a persuasion of some more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above — Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and assistance of God's spirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable service, we learn from scripture—in what particular manner this is effected, so that the act shall still be imputed ours—the scripture says not : we know only the account is so ; but as for any sensible demonstrations of it's workings to be felt as such within us—the word of

God is utterly silent ; nor can that silence be supplied by any experience. — We have none ; unless you call the false pretences to it such — suggested by an enthusiastic or distempered fancy. As expressly as we are told and pray for the inspiration of God's spirit, — there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked to distinguish them from the efforts and determinations of our own reason : and as firmly as most Christians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may venture to affirm, that since the promises were made, there never was a christian of a cool head and sound judgment, that in any instance of a change of life, would presume to say, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help, — or which to the operations of his own mind, or who, upon looking back, would pretend to strike the line, and say, " here " it was that my own reflections ended ; " — and at this point the suggestions of the spirit of God began to take place.

How-

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the discovery of such points as God never meant us to know, — we have been more successful in our own days : — thousands can trace out now the impressions of this divine intercourse in themselves, from the first moment they received it, and with such distinct intelligence of it's progress and workings, as to require no evidence of it's truth.

It must be owned, that the present age has not altogether the honour of this discovery ; — there were too many grounds given to improve on in the religious cant of the last century ; — when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the subjects of so much edification ; and, when, as they do now, the most illiterate mechanicks who as a witty divine said of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able so to frame their nonsense to the nonsense of the times, as to

beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they prayed and preached by inspiration, but that the most common actions of their lives were set about in the Spirit of the LORD.

The tenets of the Quakers (a harmless quiet people) are collateral descendants from the same enthusiastic original; and their accounts and way of reasoning upon their inward light and spiritual worship, are much the same; which last they carry thus much further, as to believe the Holy Ghost comes down upon their assemblies, and *moves* them without regard to condition or sex, to make intercessions with unutterable groans.—

So that in fact, the opinions of Methodists, upon which I was first entering, is but a republication with some alterations of the same extravagant conceits; and as enthusiasm generally speaks the same language in all ages, 'tis but too sadly verified in this; for tho' we have not yet got to the old terms of the in-comings and in-dwellings
of

of the spirit,—yet we have arrived to the first feelings of it's entrance, recorded with as particular an exactness, as an act of filiation,——so that numbers will tell you the identical place,——the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the spirit came in upon them, and took possession of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our side, That there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind; for unless a representation of the case, be a confutation of it's folly to them; they must for ever be led captive by a delusion, from which no reasoner can redeem them: for if you should enquire upon what evidence so strange a persuasion is grounded?——they will tell you, “They feel it is so.”——if you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore would wish to be satisfied by what tokens they are able to distinguish such emotions from those of fancy and complexion? they will answer, That the manner of it is incommunicable

ble by human language, — but 'tis a matter of fact, — they feel it's operations as plain and distinct, as the natural sensations of pleasure, or the pains of a disordered body. — And since I have mentioned a disordered body, I cannot help suggesting, that amongst the more serious and deluded of this sect, 'tis much to be doubted whether a disordered body has not oft times as great a share in letting in these conceits, as a disordered mind.

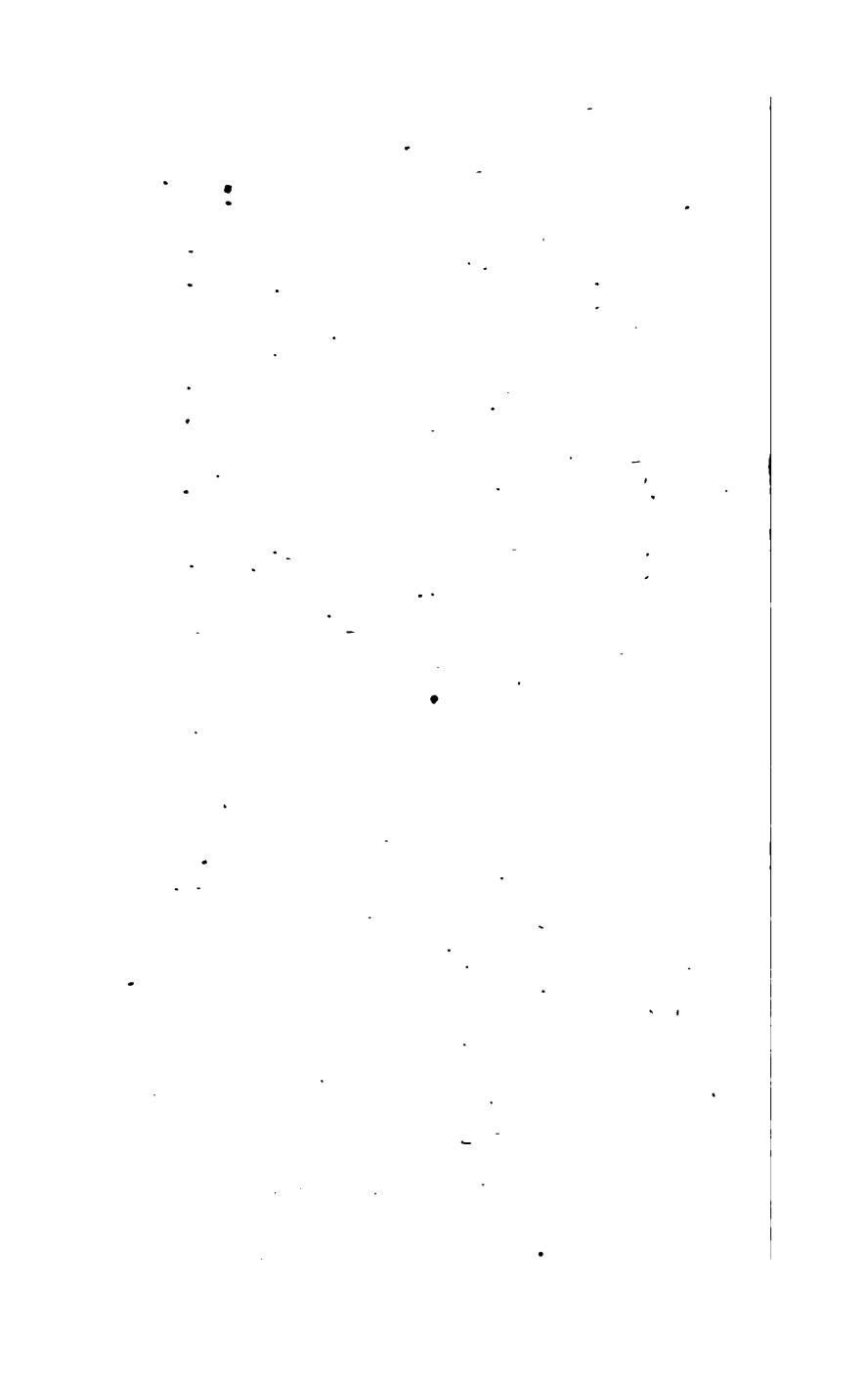
When a poor disconsolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment, — prays without ceasing 'till his imagination is heated, — fasts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind ; is it a wonder, that the mechanical disturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what they are, — or that in such a situation, where the mind sits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on it's side, is it strange if

S E R M O N X. 101

if every commotion should help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter subject for the treatment of a Physician than a Divine.

In many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either, that unless God in his mercy rebuke this lying spirit, and call it back,——it may go on and persuade millions into their destruction.

S E R-



S E R M O N XI.

Advantages of Christianity to
the world.

SERMON XI.

ROMANS .i. 22.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is so universally a bubble, as to that of being thought Wise ; and the affectation of it is so visible, in men of all complexions, that you every day see some one or other so very solicitous to establish the character, as not to allow himself leisure to do the things which fairly win it ;——expending more art and stratagem to appear so in the eyes of the world, than what would suffice to make him so in truth.

It is owing to the force of this desire, that you see in general, there is no injury touches a man so sensibly, as an insult upon his parts and capacity : tell a man of other defects, that he wants learning, industry or application,——he will hear your reproof with patience. Nay you may go further : take him in a proper season, you may tax his morals, ——you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct, ——passionate or revengeful in his nature, ——loose in his principles ; ——deliver it with the gentleness of a friend, possibly he'll not only bear with you, ——but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture and promise a reformation ; ——but hint, ——hint but at a defect in his intellectuals, ——touch but that sore place, ——from that moment you are looked upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his resentment and ill-will for ever ; so that in general you will find it safer to tell a man that he is a knave than a fool, ——and

——and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than a point of common sense.

Strange souls that we are ! as if to live well was not the greatest argument of Wisdom ; ——and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not most of all reflect upon our understandings !

This, however, is a reflection we make a shift to overlook in the heat of this pursuit ; and tho' we all covet this great character of Wisdom, there is scarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it ; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the test or the ballance ; and tho' tis of the last consequence not to be deceived in it, ——we generally take it upon trust, ——seldom suspected the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconsistent a man shall be in his opinions of this, and what absurd measures, soever he takes in consequence

sequence of it, in the conduct of his life, — he still speaks comfort to his soul ; and like Solomon, when he had least pretence for it, — in the midst of his nonsense will cry out and say, — *That all my wisdom remaineth with me.*

Where then is wisdom to be found ? and where is the place of understanding ?

The politicians of this world, *professing themselves* wise, — admit of no other claims of wisdom but the knowledge of men and business, the understanding the interests of states, — the intrigues of courts, — the finding out the passions and weaknesses of foreign ministers, — and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage. —

—— Not so the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wisdom, is to take care of himself ; — to be wise in his generation ; — to make use of the opportunity whilst he

He has it, of raising a fortune, and heraldizing a name.—Far wide is the speculative and studious man (whose office is in the clouds) from such little ideas : ——— wisdom dwells with him in finding out the secrets of nature ; ——— sounding the depths of arts and sciences ; ——— measuring the heavens ; telling the number of the stars, and calling them all by their names : so that when in our busy imaginations we have built and unbuilt *again God's stories in the heavens,* ——— and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth ; and in the language of the book of Job, have searched out the corner stone thereof, we think our titles to wisdom built upon the same basis with those of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The mistake of these pretenders, is shewn at large by the Apostle, in the chapter from which the text is taken, ——— *Professing themselves WISE,* ——— in which expression (by the way) St. Paul is

is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, considered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in respect of themselves; and amongst whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of study and enquiry, had assumed to themselves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wise Men.

With what parade and ostentation soever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the most mortifying abatements which could happen to wisdom; and that was an ignorance of those points which most concerned man to know.

This he shews from the general state of the gentile world, in the great article of their misconceptions of the Deity —and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions, —of the duties and services they owed to him, and in course of what they owed to one another.

For

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verses, ——— *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world might be clearly seen and understood, by the things that are made;* —that is, — Though God by the clearest discovery of himself, had ever laid before mankind such evident proofs of his eternal Being, — his infinite powers and perfections, so that what is to be known of his invisible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodness, — and the visible frame and order of the world: — yet so utterly were they without excuse, — that though they knew God, and saw his image and superscription in every part of his works, — — *yet they glorified him not.* — So bad a use did they make of the powers given them for this great discovery, that instead of adoring the Being thus manifested to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the most gross and absurd delusions; — *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men, — to birds, — to*
four

four footed beasts and creeping things;—
Professing themselves to be wise,—they
became fools.——All their specious wisdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the most dishonourable of all mistakes, —in setting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poisoned,—no wonder the stream shewed it's effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he describes the heathen world *as full of all unrighteousness*, —fornication, —covetousness, —maliciousness, —full of murder, —envy, —debate, —malignity, whisperers, —backbiters, —haters of God, —proud, —boasters, —inventors of evil things, —disobedient to parents, —without understanding, without natural affection, —implacable, —unmerciful! —God in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

But

But these disorders, if fairly considered, you'll say, have in no ages arisen so much from want of light, as a want of disposition to follow the light which God has ever imparted : that the law written in their hearts, was clear and express enough for any reasonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not suffered their passions more forcibly to direct them otherwise : that if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the same prejudice will recur even against the Christian religion ; since mankind have at least been as wicked in latter days, as in the more remote and simple ages of the world ; and that, if we may trust to facts, there are no vices which the Apostle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the gospel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Christian world since.

This necessarily brings us to an enquiry, Whether Christianity has done the world any service?——and, How far the morals of it have been made better since this system has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppose facts to facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us see how far their mistakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the subject.

That there was one supreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worshipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and so obvious a truth in nature,——that Reason, as the Apostle acknowledges, was always able to discover it : and yet it seems strange, that the same faculty which made the discovery, should be so little able to keep true to its own judgment, and support it long against the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propensity of
weak

weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of something to have gone hand in hand with reason, and fixed the persuasion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God, the Maker and supporter of Heaven and Earth,——infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and all perfections;——how soon was this simple idea lost, and mankind led to dispose of these attributes inherent in the God-head, and divide and subdivide them again amongst deities, which their own dreams had given substance to;——his eternal power and dominion parcelled out to gods of the land,——to gods of the sea,——to gods of the infernal regions; whilst the great God of gods, and LORD of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world,——who is so great that nought is able to controul or withstand his power, was supposed to rest contented with his allotment, and to want power to act

within such parts of his empire, as they dismembered and assigned to others.

If the number of their gods and this partition of their power, would lessen the idea of their majesty, What must be the opinions of their origin? When instead of that glorious description, which Scripture gives of "The Ancient of Days" "who inhabiteth eternity,"——they gravely assigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; so that there was scarce a hamlet or even a desert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by some favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered such conceits the more gross and absurd,——they supposed not only that the gods they worshipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleshly parents, and accordingly, they attributed to them corporeal shapes and difference of sex: and indeed in this they were a little consistent; for their deities seemed to partake
so

so much of the frailties to which flesh and blood is subject, that their history and their pedigree were much of a-piece, and might reasonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the most unmanly sensualities, and what would be a reproach to human nature, — such as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, incests; and even in the accounts which we have from the sublimest of their poets — what are they, but anecdotes of their squabbles amongst themselves, — their intrigues, their jealousies, their ungovernable transports of choler, — nay, even their thefts, — their drunkenness, and bloodshed?

Here let us stop a moment and enquire, what was Reason doing all this time, to be so miserably insulted and abused? Where held she her empire whilst her bulwarks were thus borne down, and her first principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If she was able by herself to regain the power she had lost,

and put a stop to this folly and confusion,——why did she not? If she was not able to resist this torrent alone,——the point is given up——she wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But tho' reason, you'll say, could not overthrow these popular mistakes,——yet it saw the folly of them, and was at all times able to disprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain, too, that the more diligent enquirers after truth, did not in fact fall into these absurd notions, which by the way, is an observation more to our purpose than theirs, who usually make it, and shews that tho' their reasonings were good, that there always wanted something which they could not supply to give them such weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides

Besides, — which is a more direct answer, — though 'tis true, the ablest men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods, — (for they had a religion for themselves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which necessarily supported these very mistakes, — namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I suppose more for quietness than principle's sake) to worship the gods of his country; which by the way, considering their numbers, was not so easy a task, — for what with celestial gods, and gods aerial, terrestrial and infernal, with the goddesses, their wives and mistresses, upon the lowest computation, the heathen world acknowledged no less than thirty thousand deities, all which claimed the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

But, 'twill be said, allowing the bulk of mankind were under such delusions; — they were still but speculative. —

What was that to their practice? — however defective in their theology and more abstracted points, — their morality was no way connected with it. — There is no need; that the everlasting laws of justice and mercy should be fetched down from above, — since they can be proved from more obvious mediums; — they were as necessary for the same good purposes of society then as now; and we may presume they saw their interest and pursued it.

That the necessities of society, and the impossibilities of its subsisting otherwise, would point out the convenience, or if you will, — the duty of social virtues, is unquestionable: — but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality be independent of each other: they appear so far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious

ritorious sense of the duty, can act without the influence of the other : surely the most exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue, — must come down from above, — from the love and imitation of the goodness of that Being in whose sight we wish to render ourselves acceptable : this will operate at all times and all places, — in the darkest closet as much as on the greatest and most public theatres of the world:

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or such impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many secret tryals of our virtue, we should not determine our cases of conscience with much the same kind of casuistry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjustifiable pursuit, and happening to see a picture which represented a known story of Jupiter in like transaction, — argued the matter thus within himself. — If the great Jupiter could not restrain his

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appetites,

appetites, and deny himself an indulgence of this kind, — *ego Homuncio, hoc non facerem ?* shall I a mortal, — an inconsiderable mortal too, cloathed with infirmities of flesh and blood, — pretend to a virtue, which the Father of gods and men could not ? What insolence !

The conclusion was natural enough ; and as so great a master of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then understood ; it was copied from common life, and was not the first application which had been made of the story.

It will scarce admit of a question, Whether vice would not naturally grow bold upon the credit of such an example ; or whether such impressions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world ; and had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of such notions

tions to corrupt them, it had been sufficient reason to believe it was so.

No doubt, there is sufficient room for amendment in the christian world, and we may be said to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, considering what motives we have: from the purity of our religion, and the force of it's sanctions to make us better: — yet still I affirm, if these restraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worse: and though some sense of morality might be preserved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more considerate of us, yet in general I am persuaded, that the bulk of mankind upon such a supposition, would soon come to *live without God in the world*; and in a short time differ from Indians themselves in little else but their complexions.

If after all, the christian religion has not let a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,—— the short and true answer is this, That there can be none.

It is sufficient to leave us without excuse, that the excellency of this institution in its doctrine, it's precepts, and it's examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people ;——every page is an address to our hearts to win them to these purposes ;——but as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural necessity, but by moral persuasion, which sets good and evil before them,——so that if men have power to do the evil and chuse the good,——and will abuse it,——this cannot be avoided.——Religion ever implies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to stand and free to fall.——and therefore men who will not be persuaded

suaded by this way of address, must expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

S E R-

S E R M O N XII.

**The ABUSES of CONSCIENCE
CONSIDERED.**

ADVERTISEMENT.

AS the following Sermon upon Abuses of Conscience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work, more read than understood, the Editor begs pardon of those who have purchased it in that shape, and in this also, for being made to pay twice actually for the same thing.

—— The case is common : but it was judged that some might better like it, and others better understand it just as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the sense and argument as it stands there offered to the world.

It was an Assize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote by the same hand with the others in these four volumes, and as they are probably the last (except the sweepings of the Author's study after his death) that will be published, it was thought fit to add it to the collection,——where moreover it stands

stands a chance of being read by many grave people with a much safer conscience.

All the Editor wishes, is, That this may not after all, be one of those many abuses of it set forth in what he is now going to read.

S E R M O N XII.

HEBREWS xiii. 18.

—— *For we trust we have a good Conscience,* ——

TRUST! —— Trust we have a good Conscience! —— Surely, you will say, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the most indisputable evidence, it must be this very thing, —— Whether he has a good Conscience or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a stranger to the true state of this account; — He must be privy to his own thoughts

thoughts and desires——He must remember his past pursuits, and know certainly the true springs and motives, which, in general, have govern'd the actions of his life.

In other matters we may be deceiv'd by false appearances; and, as the wise man complains, *Hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us:*——but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself:——is conscious of the web she has wove: ~~she~~ knows its texture and fineness, and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon the several designs, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now,——as Conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives,——tis plain, you will

will say, from the very terms of the proposition, whenever this inward testimony goes against a man, and he stands self-accused, —that he must necessarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his side, and his heart condemns him not, —that it is not a matter of *trust*, as the Apostle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conscience* is *good*, and that the *man* must be *good* also.

At first sight, this may seem to be a true state of the case; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impress'd upon the mind of man; that, did no such thing ever happen, as that the conscience of a man, by long habits of sin, might (as the Scripture assures us it may) insensibly become hard, and, like some tender parts of his body, by much stress, and continual hard usage, lose, by degrees, that nice sense and perception with which God and nature endowed it: —Did this never happen: —or was it certain that self-love could never

ver hang the least bias upon the judgment :
——or that the little interests below could
rise up and perplex the faculties of our
upper regions, and encompass them about
with clouds and thick darkness :——
could no such thing as favour and affection
enter this sacred court :——did
WIT disdain to take a bribe in it, or
was ashamed to shew its face as an advocate
for an unwarrantable enjoyment :——
or, lastly, were we assured that INTEREST
stood always unconcern'd whilst the cause
was hearing,——and that PASSION never
got into the judgment seat, and pronounced
sentence in the stead of reason, which
is supposed always to preside and determine
upon the case :——was this truly so,
as the objection must suppose, no doubt,
then, the religious and moral state of a
man would be exactly what he himself
esteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of
every man's life could be known, in general,
by no better measure, than the degrees of
his own approbation or censure.

I own,

I own, in one case, whenever a man's Conscience does accuse him (as it seldom errs on that side) that he is guilty; and, unless in melancholy and hypochondriac cases, we may safely pronounce that there is always sufficient grounds for the accusation.

But, the converse of the proposition will not hold true,——namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conscience must accuse; and, if it does not, that man is therefore innocent.——This is not fact:——so that the common consolation which some good Christian or other is hourly administering to himself,——That he thanks God, his mind does not misgive him; and that, consequently, he has a good Conscience, because he has a quiet one——As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at first sight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to so much error, from a false application of it:——
the

the principle on which it goes so often perverted:—the whole force of it lost, and sometimes so vilely cast away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man shall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable his conduct to the world: shall live shameless;—in the open commission of a sin which no reason or pretence can justify;—a sin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he shall ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt;—rob her of her best dowry;—and not only cover her own head with dishonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake. Surely,——you'll think, conscience must lead such a man a troublesome life;——he can have no rest night or day from its reproaches.

Alas!

Alas! Conscience had something else to do all this time than break in upon him: as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this domestic God, was either talking, or pursuing, or was in a journey, or, peradventure, be slept, and could not be awoke. Perhaps he was gone out in company, with Honour, to fight a duel, — to pay off some debt at play; — or dirty annuity the bargain of his lust. — Perhaps, Conscience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud against petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon some such puny crimes as his fortune and rank, in life, secured him against all temptation of committing: — so that he lives as merrily, — sleeps as soundly in his bed, — and, at the last, meets death with as much unconcern, — perhaps, much more so than a much better man.

Another is sordid, unmerciful;—— a strait-hearted, selfish wretch, incapable either of private friendships, or public spirit.——Take notice how he passes by the widow and orphan in their distress; and sees all the miseries incident to human life without a sigh or a prayer.——Shall not Conscience rise up and sting him on such occasions? No.——Thank God, there is no occasion. ‘I pay every man his own,——I have no fornication to answer to my Conscience, no faithless vows or promises to make up, I have debauch’d no man’s wife or child.——Thank God, I am not as other men, adulterers, unjust, or even as this libertine who stands before me.’

A third is crafty and designing in his nature.——View his whole life,—’tis nothing else but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable subterfuges basely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain dealing, and the safe enjoyment of our several properties.——You will see
such

Such a one, working out a frame of little designs upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man:—Shall raise a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,——or the unsuspecting temper of his friend, who would have trusted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and state it over again with his Conscience——Conscience looks into the *Statutes at large*,——finds perhaps no *express law* broken by what he has done;——perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd——sees no scourge waving over his head,——or prison opening its gate upon him.——What is there to affright his Conscience?——Conscience has got safely entrenched behind the letter of the law, sits there invulnerable, fortified with *cases* and *reports* so strongly on all sides,——that 'tis not preaching can dispossess it of its hold.

Another shall want even this refuge,—
shall break thro' all this ceremony of flow
chicane; scorns the doubtful workings of
secret plots and cautious trains to bring
about his purpose.——See the bare-
fac'd villain how he cheats, lyes, perjures,
robs, murders,——horrid! But, in-
deed much better was not to be expected
in this case.——The poor man was in
the dark!——His priest had got the
keeping of his Conscience,——and all
he had let him know of it was, That he
must believe in the *Pope*;—go to mass;
—cross himself;—tell his beads;—be a
good Catholic; and that this in all con-
science was enough to carry him to hea-
ven. What?—if he perjures?——
Why,——he had a mental reservation in
it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned
a wretch as you represent him,——If he
robs, or murders; will not Conscience on
every such act, receive a wound itself:
——Ay——But the man has carried
it to confession, the wound digests there,
and will do well enough,——and in a
short

short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Popery*! what hast thou to answer for?—when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways thro' which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itself above all things,——thou hast wilfully set open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*,——too apt, God knows, to go astray of himself,——and confidently speak peace to his soul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common instances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to requite much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impossible for man to be such a bubble to himself,——I must refer him a moment to his reflections, and shall then venture to trust the appeal with his own heart. Let him consider in how different a degree of detestation, numbers of wicked actions stand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures—he

will soon find that such of them as strong inclination or custom have prompted him to commit, are generally dressed out and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and a flattering hand can give them; and that the others to which he feels no propensity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, surrounded with all the true circumstances of folly and dishonour.

When David surprized Saul sleeping in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his robe, ——— we read, his heart smote him for what he had done. ——— But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant-servant, whom he ought to have loved and honoured, fell to make way for his lust; where *Conscience* had so much greater reason to take the alarm, ——— his heart smote him not. ——— A whole year had almost passed from the first commission of that crime ——— to the time Nathan was sent to reprove him; and we read not once of the least sorrow or compunction of heart, which he testified during all that time, what he had done.

Thus

Thus Conscience, this once able monitor,——placed on high as a judge within us;——and intended, by our Maker, as a just and equitable one-too,——by an unhappy train of causes and impediments,——takes often such imperfect cognizance of what passes,——does its office so negligently,——sometimes so corruptly, that it is not to be trusted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

So that if you would form a just judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in; namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,——an useful citizen,——a faithful subject to your king,——or a good servant to your GOD,——call in RELIGION and MORALITY.—Look——What is written in the law of God?——How readest thou?——Consult calm

N 4 . . . reason,

reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth,——What say they?

Let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports,——and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,——which is the case the Apostle supposes,——the rule will be infallible,——*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;——that is, have just grounds to believe the judgment thou hast past upon thyself, is the judgment of God; and nothing else but an anticipation of that righteous sentence, which will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Blessed is the man, indeed then, as the Author of the book of *Ecclesiasticus* expresses it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his sins*.——*Blessed is the man whose heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich, continues he, or whether he be poor,——if he have a good heart* (a heart thus guided and inform'd)——

He

He shall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance.——His mind shall tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above upon a tower on high. In the darkest doubts it shall conduct him safer than a thousand Casuists, and give the state he lives in a better security for his behaviour, than all the clauses and restrictions put together, which the wisdom of the legislature is forced to multiply,——forced, I say, as things stand; human laws being not a matter of original choice; but of pure necessity, brought in to fence against the mischievous effects of those Consciences which are no law unto themselves: wisely intending by the many provisions made, That in all such corrupt or misguided cases, where principle and the checks of Conscience will not make us upright,——to supply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the

eternal measures of right and wrong——the first of these will comprehend the duties of religion: the second those of morality; which are so inseparably connected together, that you cannot divide these two *Tables*; even in imagination, (tho' the attempt is often made in practice) without breaking and mutually destroying them both.

I said the attempt is often made;——and so it is;——there being nothing more common than to see a man, who has no sense at all of religion,——and indeed has *so much* of honesty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bitterest affront, should you but hint at a suspicion of his moral character,——or imagine he was not conscientiously just, and scrupulous to the uttermost mite.

When there is some appearance that it is so,——tho' one is not willing even to suspect the appearance of so great a virtue, as moral honesty;——yet were we to look into the grounds of it in the present

present case, I am persuaded we should find little reason to envy such a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he can on the subject, it will be found at last to rest upon no better foundation than either his interest, his pride, his ease; or some such little and changeable passion, as will give us but small dependence upon his actions in matters of great stress.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the physician I usually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jest of it every day, and treat all its sanctions with so much scorn and contempt, as to put the matter past doubt. Well,——notwithstanding this I put my fortune into the hands of the one,——and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other.——Now let me examine what
is

is my reason for this great confidence.—
Why,—in the first place, I believe that
there is no probability that either of them
will employ the power, I put into their
hands, to my disadvantage. I consider
that honesty serves the purposes of this
life.—I know their success in the world
depends upon the fairness of their cha-
racters;—that they cannot hurt me
without hurting themselves more.

But put it otherwise, namely, that inte-
rest lay for once on the other side.—
That a case should happen wherein the
one, without stain to his reputation, could
secret my fortune, and leave me naked in
the world;—or that the other could
send me out of it, and enjoy an estate by
my death, without dishonour to himself
or his art.—In this case what hold have
I of either of them?—Religion, the
strongest of all motives, is out of the
question.—Interest, the next most pow-
erful motive in this world, is strongly a-
gainst me.—I have nothing left to cast
into the scale to ballance this temptation!
—I must

——I must lay at the mercy of honour,
 ——or some such capricious principle.—
 Strait security! for two of my best and
 most valuable blessings,——my pro-
 perty and my life.

As therefore we can have no depen-
 dence upon morality without religion;—
 so, on the other hand, there is nothing
 better to be expected from religion with-
 out morality; nor can any man be suppo-
 sed to discharge his duties to God, (what-
 ever fair appearances he may hang out
 that he does so) if he does not pay as
 conscientious a regard to the duties, which
 he owes his fellow creature.

This is a point capable in itself of strict
 demonstration. ——— Nevertheless, 'tis
 no rarity to see a man whose real moral
 merit stands very low, who yet entertains
 the highest notion of himself, in the light
 of a devout and religious man. He shall
 not only be covetous, revengeful, impla-
 capable,——but even wanting in points
 of common honesty.——Yet because he
 talks

talks loud against the infidelity of the age,——is zealous for some points of religion,——goes twice a day to church, attends the sacraments,——and amuses himself with a few instrumental duties of religion,——shall cheat his conscience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has discharged faithfully his duty to God: and you will find, that such a man, thro' force of this delusion, generally looks down with spiritual pride upon every other man who has less affectation of piety; tho', perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself.

This is likewise a sore evil under the sun; and I believe there is no one mistaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the *Romish* church.——See what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition.——And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which set him loose from justice and humanity,——he shewed none,——mercilessly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries in this matter is not sufficient,——consider at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to God, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the inquisition.——Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet, ——there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments

struments of torment. — Hark! —
What a piteous groan! — See the melancholy wretch who uttered it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock-trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers. — Observe the last movement of that horrid engine. — What convulsions it has thrown him into. — Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretched. — What exquisite torture he endures by it. — 'Tis all nature can bear. — Good God! See how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave, — but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell, — dragged out of it again to meet the flames, — and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle, — this principle that there *can* be religion

religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The surest way to try the merit of any disputed notion,——is to trace down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with a *spirit* of christianity.——'Tis the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these and such like cases,——and is worth a thousand arguments.——*By their fruits, says he, ye shall know them.*

Thus religion and morality, like fast friends and natural allies, can never be set at variance, without the mutual ruin and dishonour of them both ;——and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wisher to either,——and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality as well as his religion will be vain.

I will add no farther, to the length of this discourse, than by two or three short and independent rules, deducible from what has been said.

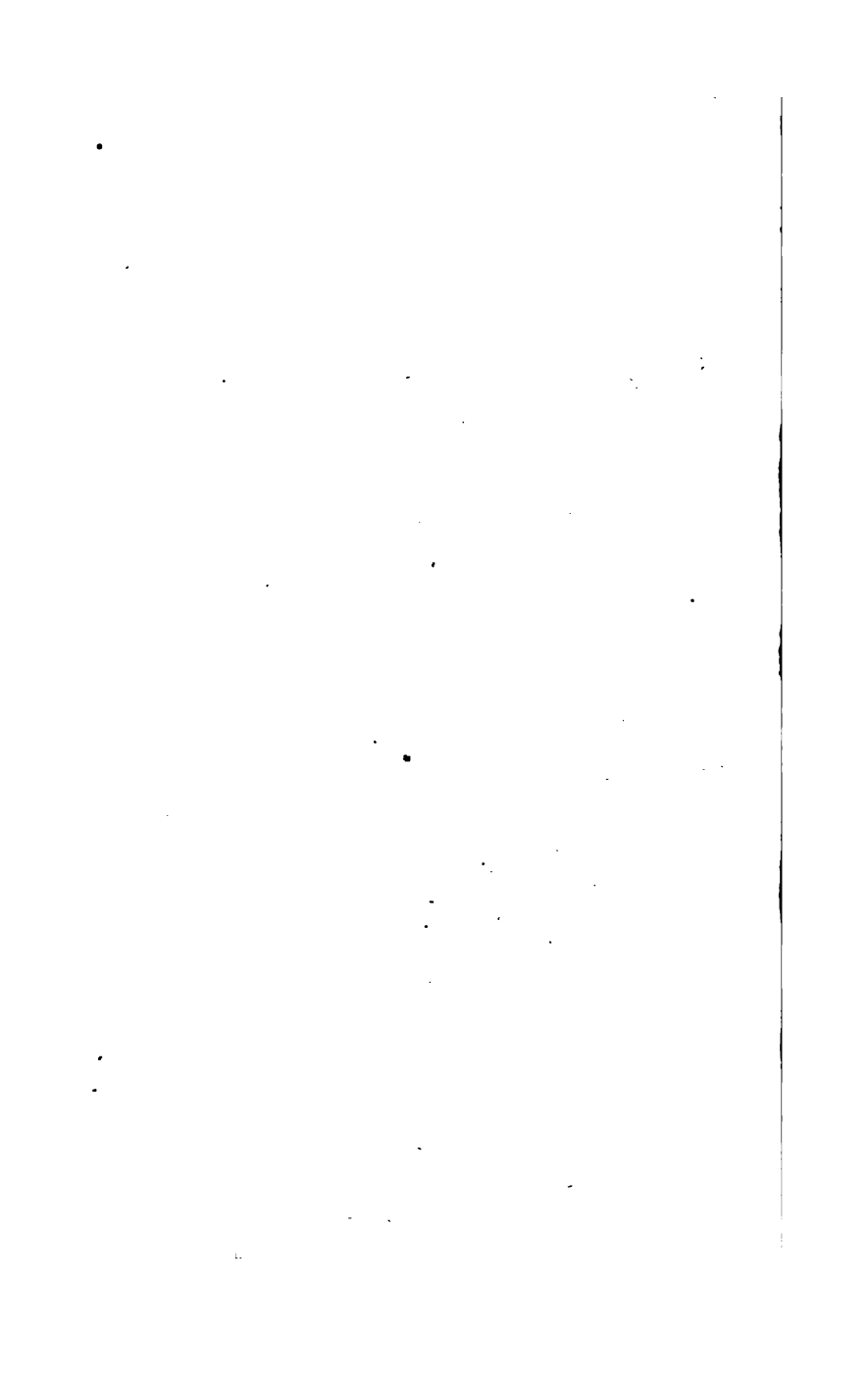
1st. Whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect that it is not his reason but his passions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are disagreeable and troublesome neighbours, and where they separate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cause but quietness sake.

2^{dly}. When a man thus represented, tells you in any particular instance, that such a thing goes *against* his conscience, —always believe he means exactly the same thing as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach, —a present want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.

In a word,—trust that man in nothing,
—who has not a conscience in every thing.

And in your own case remember this plain distinction, a mistake in which, has ruined thousands.—That your conscience is not a law;—no,—God and reason made the law, and has placed Conscience within you to determine,—not like an *Asiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions;—but like a *British judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,—but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

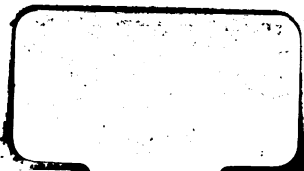
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